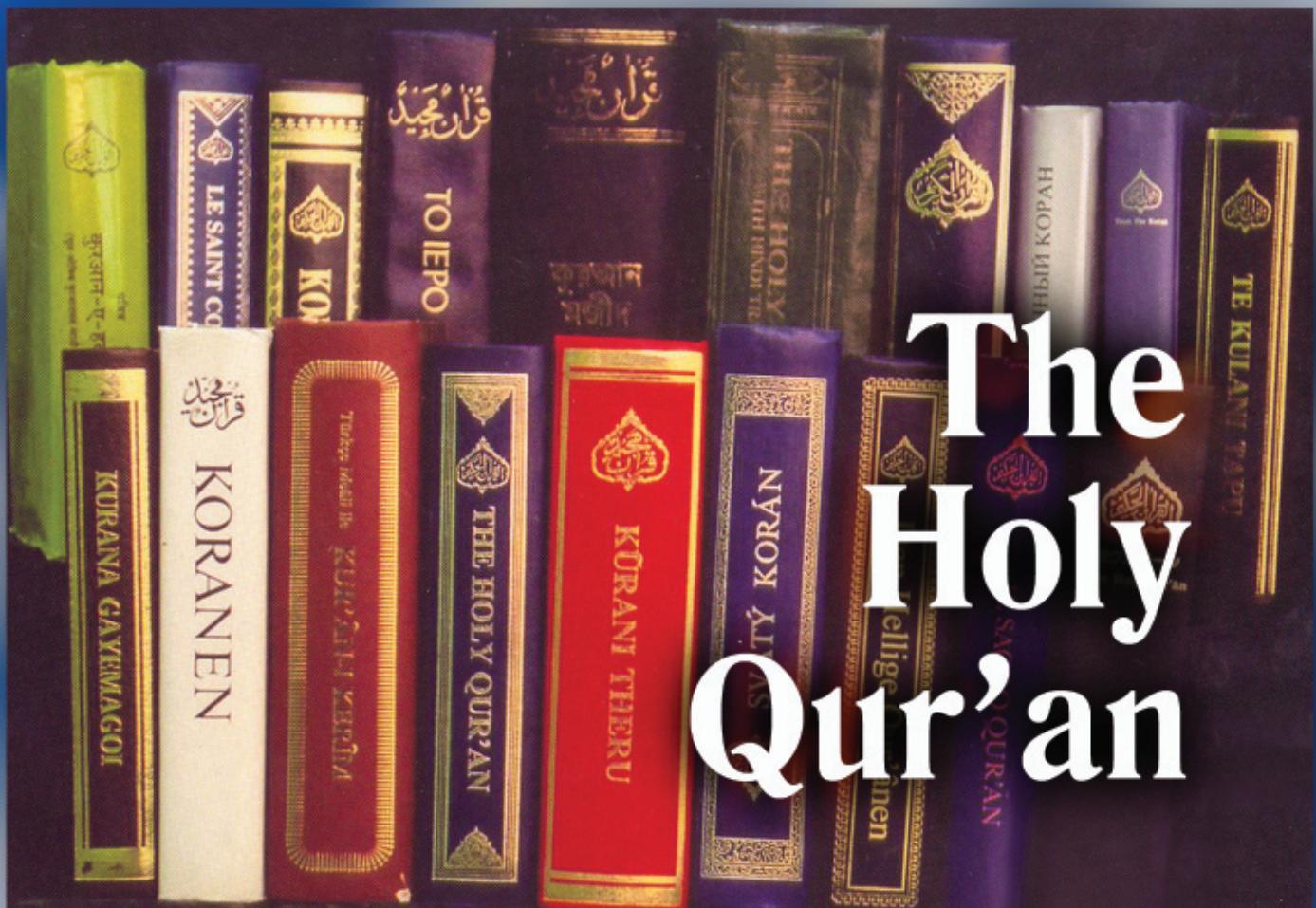


The Muslim Sunrise

Fall • 2006
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"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)

A guidance for mankind...



The Holy Qur'an

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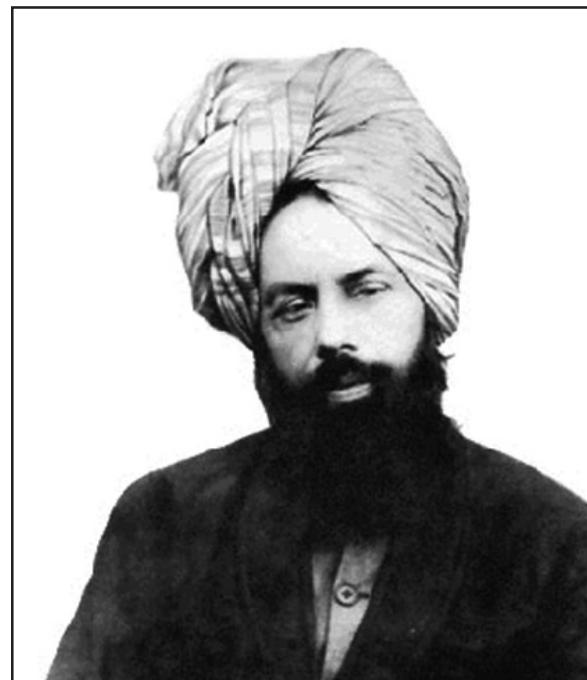
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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in over 178 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *Alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad *Sallallaho alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *Radhi-Allaho anho* or 'may Allah be pleased with him.' While such salutations have been abbreviated in the text for readability (as, sa & ra respectively), we encourage all Muslims to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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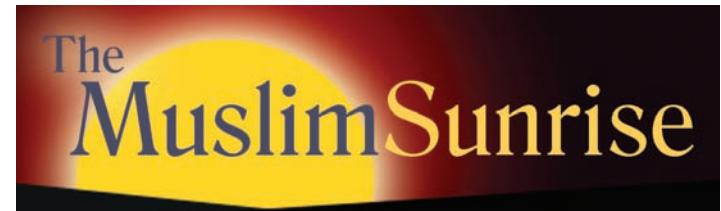
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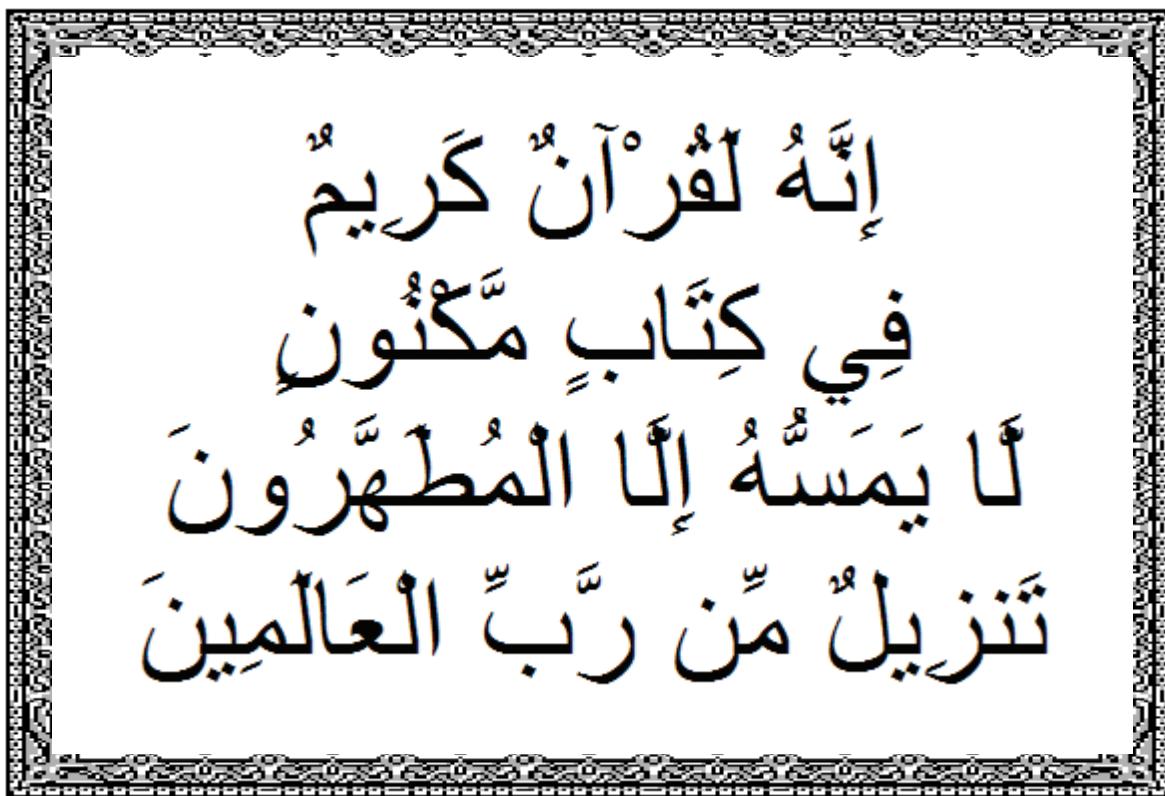
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From the Holy Qur'an



*This is, indeed, a noble Qur'an.
In a well-preserved Book,
Which none shall touch except those who are purified.
It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.*

56:78-81

Promised Messiah

Holy Qur'an: The Universal Book

The Book that would have been revealed at the beginning of creation could not, according to reason, be a perfect Book. It would be like a teacher who teaches children the alphabet. It is obvious that for such elementary instruction, no great ability is needed. When human experience increased and man fell into many errors, detailed instruction became necessary especially when the darkness of error became widespread and human souls became involved in diverse types of intellectual and practical misguidance. At that time a superior and perfect teaching was needed and that came in the Holy Qur'an. In the beginning instruction of a high grade was not needed for human souls were simple and no darkness or misguidance had settled on them. Superior teaching was needed in the book which appeared at the time of extreme misguidance and came for the reform of the people whose false doctrines had become confirmed and whose evil conduct had become a habit. [Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 23, p. 70, footnote]

It is true that man was bestowed a revealed Book in the beginning of creation, but that Book was not the Vedas. To attribute the current Vedas to God Almighty, is to offer an insult to the Holy Being. If it is asked why was only one revealed Book given to mankind in the beginning and why was not each people given a separate book, the answer is that in the beginning mankind's number was small and they did not amount even to a people, and one Book was sufficient for them. When mankind spread over the earth and the dwellers of each region of the earth became a people, and on account of long distances one people ceased to be in touch with another, Divine wisdom demanded that at such time there should be separate Messengers and revealed Books for different peoples, and so it came about.

When mankind increased in numbers still more and communications were established, and means of communication



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

became available, and it became known that different parts of the earth were inhabited by man, and God Almighty determined that they should all be made one people, and should be gathered together after their dispersal, God sent one Book for all regions. In this Book it was commanded that as it reached different parts of the world, it should be accepted and believed in. That Book is the Holy Qur'an which has been revealed to establish a relationship between different regions.

The books that were revealed before the Qur'an were confined to one people each. Books and Messengers appeared among the Syrians, Persians, Indians, Chinese, Egyptians and Romans and they were each confined to one people and were not concerned with the others. Last of all came the Holy Qur'an which is a universal Book and is not for any one people, but for all peoples. It came for a people who were henceforth to become one. Now means have become available which are bestowing a unity upon different peoples. Mutual intercourse which is at the root of

converting mankind into one people has become so easy that a journey that used to take years can now be accomplished within a few days, and such facilities have become available for communication that news that took a year to travel from one far country to another can now be transmitted within an hour.

So great a revolution is in progress, and the river of culture is flowing in such manner, that it appears obvious that God Almighty has determined that all the peoples who are scattered in the earth should be made into one people and that those who had been separated over thousands of years might now come together. This is intimated in the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Qur'an alone claims that it has come for all the peoples of the world, as it is said: Proclaim to the people:

"I am Allah's Messenger to you all". (Al-Araf, 7:159)

Again it is said: "I have sent thee as a mercy for all the peoples." (Al-Anbia, 21:108)

And it is said: "We have sent thee so that thou shouldst be a Warner for all peoples". (Al-Furqan, 25:2)

I declare with all the emphasis at my command, that no revealed Book made this claim before the Holy Qur'an. Each confined its message to its own people. Even the Prophet who was deified by the Christians affirmed: "I have not been sent but to the lost sheep of Israel."

The conditions of the world also bear testimony that the claim of the Holy Qur'an of a universal message was timely for at the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), the door of general propagation of the truth had been opened. [Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 23, pp. 74-77]

Editorial

Throughout history, the teachings of several prophets of God were preserved in the form of books. Examples of these books are the Vedas as a Hindu script, the Torah as the books of Moses^{as} and the Gospels representing the teachings of Jesus^{as}.

Use of the pen to preserve Divine guidance was applied in a unique manner, however, in the case of the Holy Qur'an. It is the only book that was recorded in writing as it was being revealed. Thus, it was not left to the followers of the religion to compile it in writing a few hundred years later. Even the first few verses revealed as part of the Holy Qur'an point to the use of the pen as it is a special blessing given to the human beings.

"Read thou in the name of thy Lord Who created, Created man from a clot of blood. Read and thy Lord is Most Generous Who taught man by the pen, taught him what he knew not." (96:2-4)

The Holy Qur'an is a book of guidance for everyday life. It has standards of morality as well as a code of behavior for men, women, children, parents, believers, non-believers, single, married, sophisticated as well as simple human beings. It is appropriate to say that it has solutions to all the difficulties, problems and complications in human life. All of its teachings are in line with nature. Thus, it



The Holy Qur'an is the only book that mentions other books of guidance and other prophets, many of them by name. It verifies that One True God sent them all as guidance for a particular time period and to a particular people.

has no conflict with the physical sciences whatsoever.

The Holy Qur'an is the only book that mentions other books of guidance and other prophets, many of them by name. It verifies that One True God sent them all as guidance for a particular time period and to a particular people.

The time had come to bring all peoples together and to compile a perfect book for guiding the human race as one people. This last book uses the doors of reason and fine intellectual points, resulting in spiritual blessings, which can be considered miracles of effect. It does not classify human beings based on their color, gender, race, tribe, ascendancy or geographical area of origin. It classifies them based on their righteousness, rejecting all other standards to judge superiority of one person over another.

The Holy Qur'an praises previous prophets such as Adam^{as}, Noah^{as}, Abraham^{as}, Moses^{as}, and Jesus^{as}. Thus, it is the only book with an inclusive

approach to guiding the human race. Previous books just ignored other religions or prophets and therefore, limited themselves to smaller spheres.

In its own words, the Holy Qur'an is a message for those who are devoted worshippers, is a reminder for the righteous, the certain truth, consummate wisdom, exposition of everything, light upon light, healing for that which is in the breasts, a decisive discourse, with lasting commandment, manifest proof for people and a guidance and a mercy for a people who have faith.

In this issue, you will find discussion of how the Holy Qur'an was preserved from the very beginning as well as a reflection of some of its teachings. We hope it will give readers an insight that will inspire them to look further and study the last guidance for mankind, as we all seek solutions for a better future for the human race.



Holy Qur'an Preserved in Substance, Sequence and Spirit

By Naveed Malik

Islam teaches that since the time of Prophet Adam^{as}, God has sent Divine guidance to various – and indeed all – nations around the world through prophets chosen from among their respective communities. Thus, we read:

“...And there is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent.” (Qur'an 35:25)

Then, when the time was right, God sent one final Divine scripture for all of mankind. As such, the Qur'an reads:

“...This is a Book which We have revealed to thee that thou mayest bring mankind out of the depths of darkness into light, by the command of their Lord, to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy.” (14:2)

The Book was revealed to Prophet Muhammad^{sa} in his native tongue of Arabic. This scripture was entitled “Qur'an,” meaning that which is read, recited or rehearsed often. The Qur'an is the sacred scripture of Islam and is comprised of 114 *suras* (chapters), which contain 6,347 *ayaat* (verses), in all.

In accordance with a Divine promise, the Qur'an has remained unchanged since its revelation 1,400 years ago. Moreover, its meaning remains preserved through the example and teachings of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, Divinely appointed reformers (*Mujaddideen*) raised at the head of each century since his passing, and in this age, through the writings of the Promised Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}.

Revelation of the Qur'an

In the year 610 C.E., while Muhammad^{sa} was meditating in the Cave of Hira, which lies on the outskirts of Mecca, the angel Gabriel came to him with the revelation:

“Recite thou in the name of thy Lord Who created; Created man from a clot of blood. Recite! And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous; Who taught by the pen, taught man what he knew not.” (96:2-6)

With these words, the 40-year-old Muhammad^{sa} was called to Prophethood and his Divine mission: To re-establish the unity of God and convey His final law to all of humanity. From 610 up until his death in 632, the Founder of Islam continued to receive Qur'anic revelation from God through the angel Gabriel.

The Blessing of Illiteracy: Qur'an Committed to Memory

Describing seventh century Arabia, Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan^{ra}, a scholar of Islam, who served as President of the United Nations 17th General Assembly, commented:

“There was little literacy in Mecca, and only limited – though steadily increasing – literacy in Medina. The Prophet himself was not literate (29:49). Paper and other facilities for preserving a record with which we are familiar today were normally not available in the Central Arabia of the early seventh century.” (The Qur'an, p. xiii)

Consequently, oral tradition was of great importance to the Arabs, who had excellent memories. When the Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, it was permanently impressed upon his memory. We read in

Karen Armstrong's *A History of God*:

"As each new segment was revealed, Muhammad, who could neither read nor write, recited it aloud, the Muslims learned it by heart and those few who were literate wrote it down." (p. 140)

Several hundred Muslims had memorized the whole of the Qur'an during the Prophet's lifetime, and today, millions know the whole of the Qur'an by heart. Indeed the Prophet himself made it a source of blessings, saying:

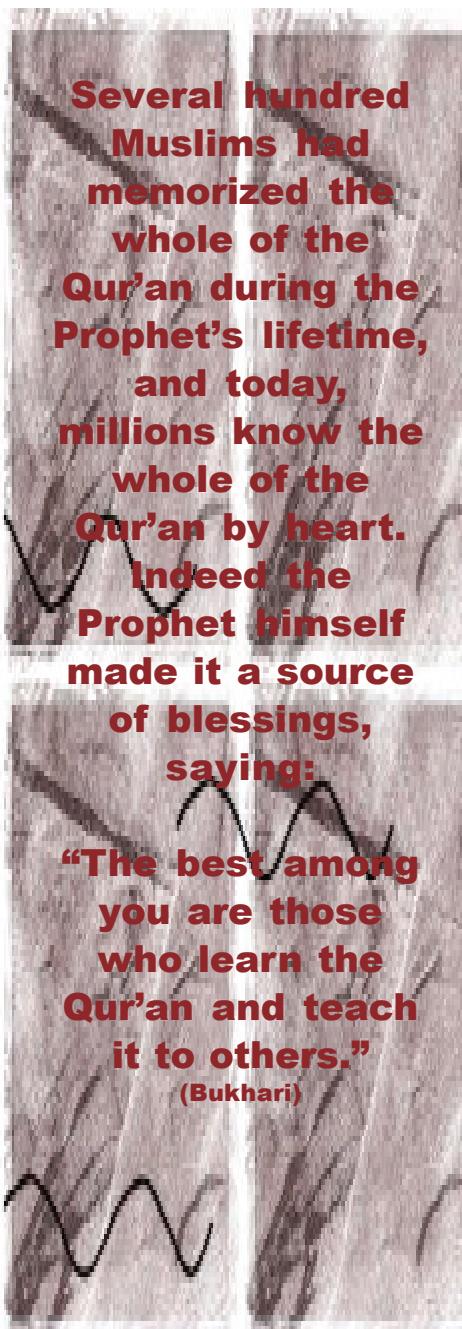
"The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it to others." (Bukhari)

The Perfect Order

Revelations that law-bearing prophets, such as Moses^{as} and Muhammad^{sa}, received from God can be divided into two simple categories: (a) scriptural revelation and (b) everything else (e.g., Divine guidance, answers to prayers, etc.). The angels that brought God's word to law-bearing prophets also informed them which revelations were to be included in their scripture.

Hence, the angel Gabriel would inform Prophet Muhammad^{sa} when Qur'anic verses were being revealed and also where they should be placed in the Qur'an. Thus, Islamic belief holds that God Himself not only revealed the Qur'an but also organized the arrangement of its verses and suras. It should be mentioned that the verses of the Qur'an were arranged in an order different from the sequence in which they were revealed. To this end, Mirza Basheeruddin Mahmood Ahmad^{ra}, second successor of the Promised Messiah, writes:

The question then arises why the arrangement adopted in the compilation of the Qur'an was different from the order in which its verses were revealed. The answer is that when the Qur'an was being revealed, the teachings and doctrines contained in it were entirely novel and unfamiliar to Arabs. Their minds had to be familiarized and impregnated with the background of Islamic doctrines and teachings so as to prepare them for the reception of the details of those teachings and doctrines. As the number of Muslims increased and Islam began to spread,



the details of the Islamic Law and teachings also began to be revealed.

The order in which the Qur'an was revealed was, therefore, best suited to the needs of the times in which it was revealed, but once the revelation was complete...it became necessary to present its teachings and doctrines to Muslims and non-Muslims from a fresh angle. To meet this need, the Holy Prophet went on giving directions under divine guidance regarding the permanent arrangement of the Qur'an for use in

the future. (Introduction to the Study of the Holy Qur'an, p. 370)

Thus, the revelation of the Qur'an was completed, as was its transcription, and many followers memorized the whole of it in the order dictated by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} during his lifetime.

Preserved in Substance, Sequence and Spirit

One of the earliest revelations God vouchsafed to Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was:

"Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian." (15:10)

Muslims believe that this was a grand prophecy, the like of which had never been made before, nor has ever been made since. God declared in no uncertain terms that the Qur'an would receive His Guardianship, and so, for all time, remain preserved in every way. This far-reaching prophecy can be further appreciated in that it was revealed to an unlettered prophet in a land where, prior to the advent of Islam, the populace was illiterate, to whom pursuit of knowledge, books and libraries had little or no place in society.

Yet, more than 1,200 years after its revelation, Sir William Muir (1819-1905), a world-renowned Orientalist, best known for his scholarly work on Islam and Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, affirmed this prophecy, concluding:

"We may, upon the strongest presumption, affirm that every verse in the Qur'an is the genuine and unaltered composition of Muhammad himself." (The Life of Mahomet, p. xxviii)

This preservation was made possible due to the numerous safeguards implemented by Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. In addition to having every verse transcribed and arranged during his lifetime, he personally taught and supervised the memorization of the entire Holy Qur'an to four of his followers, who became the principal instructors of the Qur'an to others. They were:

1. 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud
2. Salim Maula Abi Hudhaifa
3. Mu'adh bin Jabal
4. Ubayy ibn Ka'b

Incredibly, 1,400 years after the revelation of the Qur'an, there is still no serious scholarly criticism regarding the authority of the verses of the Qur'an. Few dare to challenge that even a single verse of the Qur'an was not dictated by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself.

To this end, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is reported to have said:

"Those of you who wish to learn the Qur'an should learn it from 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Salim Maula Abi Hudhaifa, Mu'adh bin Jabal or Ubayy ibn Ka'b." (Muslim)

But God's guardianship was not relegated to words alone. Accordingly, Sir Zafrulla Khan^{ra} notes:

"The safeguarding of the Exhortation comprises several aspects, the most important being the preservation of the integrity of the text of the revelation. An equally vital aspect of the safeguarding of the Exhortation is that the language in which it is contained should continue in vigorous currency and should never fall into disuse. It would not be enough for the text to be preserved intact if the means of access to it were rendered inadequate or obscure." (p. xiii)

Whereas the languages of previous prophets and scriptures fell into general disuse and were virtually lost – such as old Hebrew and Aramaic, the languages of Prophets Moses^{as} and Jesus^{as} respectively – Arabic has not only survived, it has thrived. Today, Arabic is spoken, read and/or written by more than one billion Muslims all over the world – that means that more than one in every six people in the world is proficient in Arabic.

Still, while the language remains alive and words all the same, it is the spirit, or meaning of the Qur'an, that is perhaps the most remarkable form of its preservation. Paradoxically, it is also the most controversial aspect of the Qur'an. Reading the same text, some hate-mongering clerics justify acts of terrorism in the name of Islam, while other leaders, like Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, condemn all acts of terrorism as un-Islamic, abiding by the credo of "Love for all, hatred for none."



This is nothing new, however. The Bible has long been used to justify great acts of charity and love by one reader and misused to justify genocide and slavery by another.

The true meaning of the Qur'an, however, has remained clear since its revelation, to those who earnestly seek to learn it. The *sunnah* (practice) of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was the very implementation of Qur'anic teachings, his *hadith* (sayings) a living commentary. After his passing, divinely guided reformers, dubbed *Mujaddideen*, appeared at the head of every century to remove superstitions and misunderstandings from Islam. Today, it is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, established by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the Promised Messiah, which endeavors to spread the true message of Islam and Qur'anic teachings to the world.

Concerning the true spirit of the Qur'an, God Almighty Himself pronounces:

"None shall touch it except those who are purified." (56:80)

This means that those who attain purity of heart can grasp the deeper meaning of the Qur'an through God Himself, Who is the ultimate Guardian and Teacher of the Qur'an.

Answering Objections

I. Abrogation

Incredibly, 1,400 years after the revelation of the Qur'an, there is still no serious scholarly criticism regarding the authority of the verses of the Qur'an. Few dare to challenge that even a single verse of the Qur'an was not dictated by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself.

However, as with anything, there are a few critics that seek out every opportunity to disprove the authenticity of the Qur'an (sadly, some from within the Muslim world). In their haste, they often misrepresent the following verse of the Qur'an itself as 'proof' of abrogation:

"Whatever message We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof. Knowest thou not that Allah has the power to do all that He wills?" (2:107)

The abrogation referred to above is of messages and commands contained in pre-Islamic scriptures, not Qur'anic verses. The preceding and following verses, and thus the context, of the verse deals with the People of the Book, who were jealous of the fact that the new revelation (Qur'an) displaced their own. In actuality, only certain messages and commands from prior scriptures were abrogated, which pertained only to a certain time, condition or people. The eternal truths contained in prior scriptures remained intact and are still found in the Qur'an today.

Another widely-accepted interpretation of this verse addresses the spirit of the Qur'an in the latter days. We read:

"A period is destined to come in the life of Islam when, though the letter of the Qur'an would still be intact, its spirit would be forgotten and lost by Muslims. When such a time comes, God will arrange to resuscitate the Qur'anic teachings, that is, bring back "the like thereof" by raising a special Reformer



from among Muslims.” (Holy Qur'an: Five Volume Commentary, p. 164)

One who claimed to be that Reformer was Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, Founder of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. His teachings, firmly rooted in the Qur'an, strongly reject falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty, dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; tactics that were – and sadly, still are – prevalent among so many ‘leaders’ in the Muslim world, employed only to further their own personal or political interests. The Promised Messiah’s voice of reason carried with it the lost spirit of the Qur'an, which is now firmly re-established among the adherents of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, to the benefit of all.

II. Transcription

One notable author on – though not

exactly a scholar of – Islam, Reza Aslan, has also recently made a misstatement regarding the compilation of the Qur'an in his book, *No god but God*, which we are compelled to set right. Mr. Aslan asserts that during the Prophet's life,

“Only the most important recitations – those dealing with legal issues – were ever written down, primarily on bits of bone, scraps of leather, and the ribs of palm leaves.” (p. 126)

Mr. Aslan provides no reference or citation for this statement. He apparently failed to carefully review the traditions as they reveal that, in fact, all Qur'anic revelations were recorded during the lifetime of the Prophet. Mirza Basheeruddin Mahmood Ahmad^{ra} writes:

“As soon as a revelation was received by the Holy Prophet, it was recorded in writing from his dictation. A number of

persons are known to have been employed by the Holy Prophet for this purpose. Of these, the names of the following fifteen have been mentioned in the traditions (Fath al-Bari, Vol. 9, p. 19):

- 1 Zaid bin Thabit
- 2 Ubayy ibn Ka'b
- 3 'Abdullah bin Sa'd bin Abi Sarh
- 4 Zubair bin al-Awwam
- 5 Khalid bin Sa'id bin al-As
- 6 Aban bin Sa'id bin al-As
- 7 Hanzala bin al-Rabi al-Asadi
- 8 Mu'aqib bin Abi Fatima
- 9 'Abdullah bin Aqram al-Zuhri
- 10 Shurahbil bin Hasana
- 11 Abdullah bin Rawaha
- 12 Abu Bakr
- 13 Umar
- 14 Uthman
- 15 Ali

Yet, more than 1,200 years after its revelation, Sir William Muir (1819-1905), a world-renowned Orientalist, best known for his scholarly work on Islam and Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, affirmed this prophecy, concluding: “We may, upon the strongest presumption, affirm that every verse in the Qur'an is the genuine and unaltered composition of Muhammad himself.”

(The Life of Mahomet, p. xxviii)

Whenever the Holy Prophet received a revelation, he would send for one of these persons and dictate to him the text of the revelation he had received.” (pp. 355-6)

In further support of a faithful transcription, famed historian Theodor Noldeke (1836-1930), who won the prize of the French *Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* for his history of the Qur'an, writes:

“The efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Qur'an have failed.” (Enc. Brit. 9th Edition – “Qur'an”)

III. Compilation

There are some who would argue that the Qur'an was not compiled into one volume until the third Khilafat – that of Uthman^{ra}. Reza Aslan readily adopts this mistaken view, arguing, rather crudely, that Uthman^{ra} endeavored to do what “Muhammad had never bothered doing: to create a single, codified, uniform text of the Qur'an” (*No god but God*, p. 126).

Toby Lester, in his article, “What is the Qur'an?”, writes:

“Uthman convened an editorial committee of sorts that carefully gathered the various pieces of scripture that had been memorized or written down by Muhammad's companions. The result was a standard written version of the Koran.”

Authentic historical records, however, bear witness to an earlier compilation of the Qur'an. It has already been established that all Qur'anic revelations were transcribed during the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, under his personal direction.

It is also recorded in history that soon after the death of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, Musailima marched on Medina with an army of 100,000 soldiers. Abu Bakr^{ra}, Khalifatun Nabi I, first successor of the Prophet, sent an army of just 13,000 soldiers, headed by Khalid bin Walid^{ra}, to defend against the attack. In the battle, which was won by the Muslims, 500 Muslims who knew the whole Qur'an by heart were martyred. This led Umar^{ra}, who would become the second successor of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, to suggest to Abu Bakr^{ra} the gathering of the Qur'an into one volume (*Mus'haf*). This was carried out under the direct supervision of Abu Bakr^{ra}, greatest of all companions and first successor of the Prophet, and Zaid bin Thabit^{ra}, the first and foremost transcriber of the Qur'an from the Prophet himself.

IV. Arrangement

Karen Armstrong narrates that Uthman^{ra} and his committee were responsible for the arrangement of the Qur'anic chapters. She writes:

“The editors put the longest suras at the beginning and the shortest at the end.” (A History of God, p. 140)

If what Ms. Armstrong asserts is correct, why is al-Shu'ara, the second longest sura at 228 verses, the 26th chapter of the Qur'an? Why is al-Fatihah, one of the shortest suras at just seven verses, the first chapter of the Qur'an? It is obvious, then, that sheer length was not the organizing principle of Qur'anic chapters. Neither were the ‘editors,’ as Ms. Armstrong dubs them, responsible for their arrangement. Addressing both the compilation and arrangement of the Qur'an, Khalifatul Masih II writes:

“It is sometimes asserted that the arrangement of the Chapters of the Qur'an is the work of Uthman. This is not correct. It is well known that the Holy Prophet used to recite the whole of the Qur'an in Ramadhan and some of his Companions also did so.” (Introduction to the Study of the Holy Qur'an, p. 368)

It was mentioned earlier that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} had firmly established the order for the entire Qur'an in his lifetime. Mr. Lester levies a similar charge against the Qur'an's order, writing:

“The book's organizing principle is neither chronological nor thematic – for the most part the suras are arranged from beginning to end in descending order of length.”

Addressing this assertion, Mirza Basheeruddin Mahmood Ahmad^{ra} continues:

“The strongest evidence, however, in support of the [Divine] arrangement adopted in the compilation of the Qur'an is the evidence of the subject-matter itself. A study of the Qur'an reveals that the subject-matter of each Chapter is connected with the subject-matter of the preceding and the following Chapters. If the current arrangement was adopted by Uthman merely with reference to the length of each Chapter, how is it that the arrangement reveals a continuity of topics and subject matter? (Ibid., p. 369)

The author illustrates this principle using the first two chapters of the Qur'an, Al-Fatihah – revealed at Mecca – and Al-Baqarah – revealed years later at Medina. In Sura Al-Fatihah, there is a prayer, “Guide

us on the right path.” (1:6) and in the very first verses of Sura Al-Baqarah, there is an answer to it: “This is a perfect Book, there is no doubt in it. It is a guidance for the righteous” (2:3). This is just the first of numerous clear links between chapters of the Qur'an.

Every chapter of both the one- and five-volume Qur'an with Commentary – published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community – begins with a discussion of its subject matter. An unbiased reader can come to no other conclusion than the chapters of the Qur'an are clearly interrelated.

The Qur'an Today

Pious Muslims look to the Qur'an as their primary source of guidance from God. Islam, however, *requires* its followers to believe in *all* the books of God; indeed, it is one of the fundamental articles of faith (i.e., belief in the revealed Books of Allah). If a person denies the truth of the Scrolls of Abraham^{as} (87:20), the Torah of Moses^{as} (3:4), the Psalms of David^{as} (4:164) or the Gospel of Jesus^{as} (5:47), s/he can hardly be considered a follower of Islamic teachings.

However, of all the Divine scriptures sent to humanity, including those mentioned above, it is only the Qur'an which has remained preserved in substance, sequence, spirit, and in its original language. It is only the Qur'an that even claims to be for all of humanity. This necessitates that a seeker of truth, in an ever-shrinking world, should learn what the Qur'an has to say.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has taken great pains to faithfully translate the Qur'an into more than 100 languages, and provides these translations free of charge, with supportive commentary, online at www.alislam.org. Only by first studying the Qur'an will the sincerely interested American be able to truly answer the question of the day: “What does Islam teach?”♦

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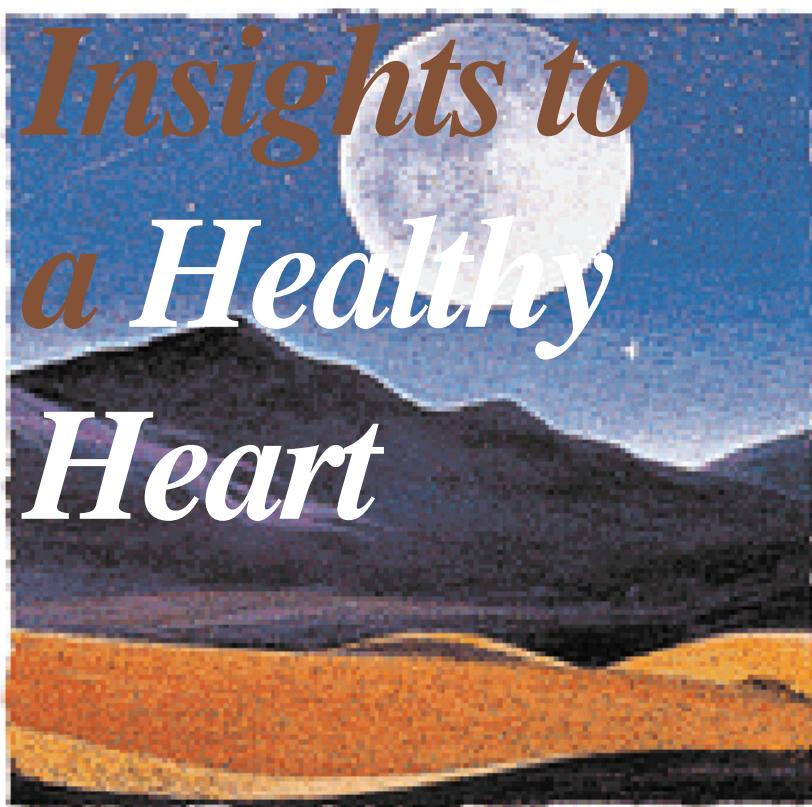
Islam, however, requires its followers to believe in all the books of God; indeed, it is one of the fundamental articles of faith (i.e., belief in the revealed Books of Allah). If a person denies the truth of the Scrolls of Abraham^{as} (87:20), the Torah of Moses^{as} (3:4), the Psalms of David^{as} (4:164) or the Gospel of Jesus^{as} (5:47), s/he can hardly be considered a follower of Islamic teachings.

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The Heart of the Matter: *Qur'anic*



By Jalaluddin A. Malik

This article takes neither a strictly scientific nor a strictly philosophical approach, but one which combines both scientific facts and philosophical reasoning to expound upon the beauty and simplicity of the Qur'an, and, of course, its truth.

The Holy Qur'an is a book which is full of beautiful moral and spiritual guidance. This is a claim made not only by the billions who have opened their eyes to read what is contained within, but is also a claim made by the very Author of the book Himself: "a guidance for the righteous" (2:3)¹. The guidance contained within even one verse can suffice to accelerate a person's progression in the realm of personal as well as collective (or communal) understanding and advancement. Whether it is a verse

instructing the individual to "observe prayer at the declining and paling of the sun on to the darkness of the night," (17:79) or a collective teaching such as instructing the believers to "pass by with dignity" (25:73) when approaching that which is vain, the verses come alive to teach humans how to excel in many ways. It is worth noting that many instructions can be seen to apply to both the individual and the community, as is clearly seen by these two teachings.

Being replete with wisdom to the highest level, it is not surprising that this book would also contain education in the medical field. It is quite a well established fact that the teachings of the Holy Qur'an are brimming with many medical verities which have only recently been understood (and to a most superficial level at that). For

instance, embryology is a subject which is quite beautifully taught in many verses of the Holy Qur'an. In Sura Al-Hajj, we read:

"O people, if you are in doubt concerning the Resurrection, then consider that We have indeed created you from dust, then from a sperm drop, then from clotted blood, then from a lump of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We make Our power manifest to you. And We cause what We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed term; then We bring you forth as babes; then We rear you that you may attain to your age of full strength..." (22:6).

In Sura Al-Mu'minun, we read:

"Then We fashioned the sperm into a clot; then We fashioned the clot into a shapeless lump; then We fashioned bones out of this shapeless lump; Then We clothed the bones with flesh; Then We developed it into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators" (23:15).

These are but two examples of knowledge which science is struggling to keep pace with. In fact, it is well known that many different theories of even the formation of the embryo itself have been rampant. We find that it was not long ago that eminent scientists of their day stated that the complete human being was contained within the male sperm in a miniaturized version (the *homunculus*); whereas the teachings of an illiterate desert dweller, 1400 years ago, not only taught the correct understanding of the formation of the embryo (from "a gushing fluid, which issues forth from between the loins and the breast-bones," Ch. 86:7-8), but also taught intricate details of the evolution of that "new creation" to a clump of cells, and on to a being with eyes, ears, limbs, and so on.

In the evolution of this lump of flesh must also develop the heart. The heart is a very intriguing and beautiful organ. It not only carries on the critical task of pumping blood throughout the body, but throughout history has long been associated with many tales of love and understanding. What is it that affords this organ such a strong place in the minds of people? Why not the spleen or liver, or even the kidneys? Perhaps it is because it pumps that essential fluid to all parts of our body, a function not only

essential for our survival, but a function that serves to illustrate how the heart permeates into every part of our body and nourishes and cleanses each and every cell. And as love is that which sits at the center of one's being and serves to nourish and cleanse one's soul, the further one is from this source of nourishment, the further one is from life. It would not be surprising, then, to find that the Holy Qur'an, a book which claims to contain the words of God, the Most High, teaches and educates one as to the nature of the heart.

It is upon reading just a single verse from this beautiful book that I noticed one such beautiful teaching about the heart; a lesson for the body and the soul. We read in Chapter Al-An'am:

“So, whomsoever Allah wishes to guide, He expands his bosom (heart) for the acceptance of Islam; and as to him whom He wishes to let go astray, He makes his bosom (heart) narrow and close, as though he were mounting up into the skies. Thus does Allah inflict punishment on those who do not believe” (6:126).

When the verse is read cursorily, one may conclude that as God Himself expands the bosom (heart), what need is there for a person to believe, for if God does not wish to guide someone, then He will not open their heart (and therefore it would be God's responsibility for one's belief or disbelief). However, this approach, which has been taken by many a critic of the Qur'an, fails to recognize the beautiful style employed by the Qur'an in explaining a principle (just as the royal 'We' in many languages and Holy Books has been misunderstood by many unfortunate people throughout time as meaning more than one entity). It is well known by most scholars of the Holy Qur'an that as the Qur'an states that God Almighty is the ultimate Cause of all causes, and as He is the One Who gave us the choice to accept or reject a teaching, then it simply follows that He is the "Cause" of our belief



(or the opening of our hearts). However, since people are given the choice, the responsibility rests with the individual. Therefore, if we reject a good teaching, then the rejection of that which is good will naturally lead to bad, and so disbelief and turning away from good teachings will lead to detrimental results.

Open Your Heart

Therefore, when reading this verse, a simple yet very important teaching comes to light in maintaining a healthy heart: if you wish to be guided to that which is good, then you must first open your heart to submit to a good teaching. The relationship between submitting to an instruction and understanding its benefit are very closely related, and one can lead to the other (i.e. first submitting to an instruction can later lead to the understanding of its benefit, as can the understanding of its benefit lead one to submit to it). For instance, when a doctor prescribes a medicine for a patient,

“So, whomsoever Allah wishes to guide, He expands his bosom (heart) for the acceptance of Islam; and as to him whom He wishes to let go astray, He makes his bosom (heart) narrow and close, as though he were mounting up into the skies. Thus does Allah inflict punishment on those who do not believe” (6:126).

the patient does not always fully realize the significance of taking that medicine and how it will affect the ailment. Patients rarely understand the complexity behind a single prescription; the biochemistry behind the mechanism of action in that medicine, how the medicine interacts with particular cells in the body and causes or blocks certain reactions, the binding of that compound on special receptors, etc. At best, the patient will have a superficial understanding that the medicine should help in curing the ailment. However, the patient still submits to the will of the doctor and takes the medicine, trusting that the doctor has prescribed the medicine in the hope that he or she will be relieved of suffering caused by the ailment. In the same way, it is explained in this verse that to receive guidance, one must open one's heart to submit. What is it that we are being taught to submit to?

What then is meant when it is said that we must first open our hearts to submit to a good teaching? It simply means that we should be “open-minded” and submit to those teachings even if we do not completely understand all the benefits of those teachings, and then we will be guided aright and reap the benefits of acting upon them.

Upward Spiral Good Leads to Further Good

The words used by the Qur'an are *yashrah sadrahu lil-Islam*, "he opens his heart for (the acceptance of) Islam." Thus, we are taught to open our hearts not just for the physical heart, but also the spiritual heart. In addition to the great number of teachings leading to the physical well-being of people, there is an abundance of teachings for moral and spiritual advancement. When people act upon this divine guidance, they are also led to good moral and spiritual health, which will lead one to appreciate and want to follow this guidance even further; this cycle goes on to continuously lift one to higher and higher stages of being. Love being at the center of this intriguing relationship, one is further led to an increase of love for the One Who has provided this guidance. In return, one also sees an increase in the manifestation of love from that Guide towards the one who tries to follow that guidance.

What then is meant when it is said that we must first open our hearts to submit to a good teaching? It simply means that we should be "open-minded" and submit to those teachings even if we do not completely understand all the benefits of those teachings, and then we will be guided aright and reap the benefits of acting upon them. However, what happens if one does not do that? Some people object by pointing out that since every aspect of the benefit of a teaching is not known with full certainty, then if a person refuses to follow that teaching or guidance, then he or she will not be to blame for not following the guidance. In other words, since God is ultimately the One Who guides, and they do not know all the reasons (or benefits) of a particular teaching, then why should they be punished? Should not God have shown not only the path, but the reasons why they should also tread on it? The truth is, although every aspect of the benefit of a particular teaching may not be known, many aspects are apparent and there are other factors that can lead one to conclude that something is beneficial (the source of a particular instruction being one of the major factors in determining the worth of an instruction). As such, one would still be responsible for the consequences of accepting or rejecting that guidance. In other

Once again, when understood to apply to the spiritual heart, one can appreciate that disregarding divine values and guidance always lead to moral and spiritual regression. For instance, religion teaches humility and modesty; when people disregard these teachings they are led to immorality and spiritual decline.

words, even if direct evidence is not known at the time, since there is always circumstantial evidence of some sort to indicate if a teaching is beneficial or harmful, then one cannot say that he or she had no idea of its benefit. Even though the patient may not know every aspect of the benefit of the doctor's prescription, it would be unwise, and most likely detrimental, for the patient to refuse the doctor's advice. Knowing that the doctor has greater knowledge about medicine, and having had the experience that other prescriptions have worked well in the past, the patient is well advised to accept the doctor's advice and comply with their instructions. If this is not done, then one may end up causing one's own ruin and poor health. Simply objecting that one was hesitant to follow the doctor's advice because one was not sure of the outcome will lead nowhere, except to ill directed blame.

Downward Spiral Bad Leads to Further Bad

To this end, the verse goes further to point out "and as to him whom He wishes to let go astray, He makes his bosom narrow and close, as though he were mounting up into the skies." This verse shows that when good guidance is not accepted and submitted to, then the consequences can only be bad. Just as proper diet and exercise lead to a healthy heart, not maintaining a proper diet and exercise will lead to an unhealthy heart. What is quite remarkable here is that the words also point to the physical state of the heart and effect on a person, "his bosom becomes narrow and close." This is exactly what happens when one suffers from the effects of an unhealthy heart. Patients with *angina pectoris* (chest pain or discomfort due to coronary heart disease) are quite aware of the feelings of a tight chest and constriction due to the poor condition of their heart. What further aggravates this tightness is if one was to

do any exercise, "as if he were climbing a steep height." It is further interesting to note that among the diagnostic tests to determine if a person has a poor heart condition, one of the first tests done is an exercise or stress test. A patient's heart is monitored while undergoing "stress" such as walking, usually on a treadmill, and the gradient of the slope is slowly increased, as if the patient were climbing a height. At any point during the test, if the patient feels out of breath and experiences tightness in the chest, it is taken to be an indicator of a diseased heart. What science is only now discovering, the Holy Qur'an had already described with remarkable clarity over 1,400 years ago.

Once again, when understood to apply to the spiritual heart, one can appreciate that disregarding divine values and guidance always lead to moral and spiritual regression. For instance, religion teaches humility and modesty; when people disregard these teachings they are led to immorality and spiritual decline. I remember speaking with an older American gentleman once, who noted the beauty of Islamic teachings with regards to modesty of dress, which the West aggressively criticizes. He observed in his own lifetime the decline of modesty of dress, something which I had even noticed to a lesser degree in my own short life. He would recall how ladies "back in the day," would only ever wear skirts if they reached all the way down to the ankles; the sleeves of their shirts went to their wrists and they wore gloves to cover their hands. It was an expression of modesty for a dignified lady to cover herself properly, including her head. Slowly, however, the gloves were lost and the skirts rose a slight amount to where the lower leg could be seen. This was considered *risqué*, but as it was only a "small" step, it was tolerated to some degree. As time progressed and society "advanced," shirts

inched closer and closer to the body and skirts rose to reveal more of the human form. A point came where even I noted the gradual decline in the modesty of dress in my own lifetime, with the appearance and acceptance of the miniskirt and tank top shirts, which reveal the full figure of a lady. I recall how this was considered quite daring for its time, but as time has progressed to the present age, we can see how these forms of dress are commonplace, to the point where a long, loose dress and loose shirt are considered backwards and outdated! Men are not altogether free from this decline in modesty, which is incumbent upon them also. The gradual tightening of the pants and shirt to show off their appearance is something to be found commonly among many men.

One can easily see how rejecting teachings of the faith can lead to a decline in moral standards (a negative, downward spiral), whether they occur slowly over ages or as rapidly as we have seen with clothing right here in the U.S.. As immodest dress does not improve the quality of one's life or work, it can be seen how this only leads to negative results, and should therefore be avoided. For instance, a lady doctor would not know more if she wore skintight clothes or a shirt baring her midriff, nor would a computer analyst know more by wearing immodest dress. Conversely, a woman who was to cover her head would have no less knowledge nor be any less skillful in a good profession than one who doesn't. More attention tends to get paid to looks than to actual skill or ability. Modesty of dress is taught by all faiths and immodesty usually only serves to boost one's ego and oftentimes leads to immodest behavior. In opposition to this, modesty of dress leads to beneficial results and should therefore be adopted.

The efficacy of the instructions of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^{ra}, Fourth Successor of the Promised Messiah, to the women of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community not to become loose in their use of veils can easily be seen, for once a thing is loosened, it is much easier for it to come off. It is the same with respect to the heart, as *atherosclerosis* is a process that takes time. Poor eating habits and lack of exercise

lead to a slow decay of the arteries due to the accumulation of *atherosclerotic* plaque, which over time leads to a clogging of the heart's arteries (and in fact other organs of the body). The effects on the heart and brain are more pronounced, and one is slowly led to a life of poor general health. Normal tasks become taxing to the body, to the point that one's general state of affairs becomes slowed and one cannot do as much as one could have done, had they kept good health. In contrast, if the same person submits to a



proper diet and exercise, the effects of *atherosclerosis* would be markedly reduced and the same person could engage in a much greater amount of activity and have a much better state of health overall. The teachings of the same faith with respect to moral and spiritual advancement can be seen to follow the same patterns as demonstrated above, and so, the neglect of the moral and spiritual guidance of Islam would understandably lead to moral and spiritual decay.

The Suffering Heart

"So, whomsoever Allah wishes to guide, He expands his bosom (heart) for the acceptance of Islam; and as to him whom He wishes to let go astray, He makes his bosom (heart) narrow and close, as though he were mounting up into the skies. Thus does Allah inflict punishment on those who do not believe." (6:126)

Thus, a firm reminder is added at the end of the verse to warn people of the infliction of punishment on those who do not believe, and to be ready to submit to the teachings of the faith, for the teachings of religion can only bring about life. If people do not do so, by their own actions they become the cause of inflicting punishment upon themselves,

as we have noted what happens to the heart both physically and spiritually when one ignores the teachings of God. One must remember that the true teachings of faith are meant to bring about life and lead one to higher understanding. The experience of thousands of saintly figures throughout history bears great testimony to this fact, and should lead all seekers of truth to study further and ponder the deeply insightful nature of the words of God. The knowledge and understanding that can be gleaned from just this one verse of the Holy Qur'an should be enough to convince even a hardened critic of the Qur'an that this is a true book, worthy of further study.

Light Upon Light

From the earth, a star seems to be no more than a small glimmering dot, with barely enough light to guide even a single step in darkness. However, as one ascends beyond the clouds and travels closer to that shimmering little glow, one becomes further aware of the glory and majesty that this tiny light contains. As one is drawn closer to its beauty, one realizes what was once seen as barely enough light to guide a man's step, provides enough light and warmth to give life to the whole of another world, and the insignificance of one's own being becomes apparent. When one follows the guidance of religion, then one is truly led to good health, both physically and spiritually, and is led from "all kinds of darkness into light" (2:258)¹ because "Light has come into the world" (John 3:19)². It is in this sense that when one allows oneself to be led by God's teachings and lives truthfully, then one has "eternal life" (John 3:15-16)² and becomes a living sign of the strength and power of that light, and becomes a friend of one's Beloved (2:258)¹ ♦

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(Endnotes)

¹ The Holy Qur'an, Arabic Text and English Translation, Islam International Publications Limited, Islamabad, Tilford, Surrey, UK, 1997.

² The Holy Bible, New International Version, International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, 1984.

From the Archives

Democracy's First Line of Defense: Islam



*Excerpts from an Address by
Congressman John T. Wood*

*We owe sincere thanks to the
Honorable John T. Wood of Idaho
for his permission to reproduce
excerpts from an address delivered
to the House of Representatives on
February 25, 1952.*

*CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol.
98, No. 28. -- Editor*

Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing today throughout the world an unprecedented upsurge of national self-expression by the weaker and smaller nations never before manifested as the recorded histories of all civilizations will testify.

If we prostitute our national prestige and pander to the predatory ambitions of nations seeking to sanctify their aggression by the pious use of power, we shall also reap the penalty which finally rewards traitors to their trust. That is the irrevocable law of retributive justice. There is escape

neither for nations nor individuals.

The Moslems scratch their soil and they find it rich beyond measure with God-given natural resources. They regard these natural resources as their national heritage. They feel that they are entitled to something more than the horse, the goat, and sometimes the gun their alien oppressors permit them as the substitute for their God-given rights.

In the fulfillment of their historic mission they cannot understand why it is considered wrong to revolt against the foreign oppression which enslaves them and exploits their natural resources. In the well-known words of the illustrious Colonel Lawrence of Arabia, "there is a revolt in the desert." Alas, he omitted the nub, "against oppression."

The time has long since passed into history when such unfair standards can prevail anywhere in the world. These recent victims of political and economic servitude to alien oppressors now seek their inalienable God-given rights and their rightful place in the family of the peace-loving nations.

The peoples of the Near East, Middle East, and the Far East are Moslems, with few exceptions. This also applies to North

Africa. "Islam" is the "official" name for the religious belief practiced by Moslems. There are approximately 400,000,000 Moslems in the areas I have just mentioned, including the Philippines. *They are all our friends.*

The world's 400,000,000 Moslems are a deeply religious people. Moslems observe their religion more seriously than do most nominal Christians. Few Christians get down on their knees three times daily for devout prayer. The word "Islam" itself may be literally interpreted, "Thy will be done." Moslems are capable of the most intense religio-patriotic fervor. Witness Islam becoming the greatest empire in world history within the first hundred years after the death of the founder of their faith in the Seventh Century A. D. *Islam is today a greater spiritual force than ever.*

The Soviet Union did not dare to attempt an invasion of the Near East recently, when the time seemed so opportune, because the Soviet Union had never been able to organize effective branches of the Communist Party in Moslem areas. Where Islam flourishes the soil is not fertile for atheism. *In the presence of Islam, communism retreats.*

The communizing efforts of the Soviet Union's agents in Moslem areas had never reached the point where internal revolt and the creation of puppet satellite governments were at all possible. Communizing efforts of the Soviet Union have apparently been outstandingly successful only in Christian countries, with the exception of China, and that sell-out was plotted by those who call themselves Christians, "but who are not." Where Islam thrives, atheism dies. *Islam is the invincible, yet invisible foe of communism.*

Why have the communizing efforts of the Soviet Union succeeded amongst Poles, Czechoslovaks, Hungarians, and Bulgarians, yet failed among the Moslems? The answer can be stated in one word, "*Islam*." The believers in Islam stand like a wall of stone against the onrushing flood of that Communist-bred atheism which is sweeping over the world and already has under its rule almost one-half the world's population and one-half the total land area of this world.

The leaders of the Communist-bred atheist creeping-conquest of the world get a shiver down their spines at the thought of collaboration, between the 400,000,000 Christians in the free world and the 400,000,000 Moslems, to resist their seemingly certain victory for atheism. Collaboration by the 400,000,000 Christians of the free world and the 400,000,000 Moslems could very well mean disintegration and defeat for Communism's program for their domination of the world.

The Communist-bred forces of atheism could never survive a real coalition between the two great religious groups of the world today. The combined resistance of the 800,000,000 deeply religious peoples of the Christian and Moslem worlds will certainly triumph over the assault of the 800,000,000 Communist-bred atheists against that bastion of the inalienable right of the individual to freely worship God according to one's own conscience, without interference.

The believers in Islam do not fear death in battle for a righteous cause. Death in

battle is reputed to transport a believer in Islam immediately into the realm of the blessed. In spite of propaganda to the contrary Americans must learn that through the ages Moslems have earned the reputation of being completely reliable and absolutely faithful allies in peace as well as in war. Islam teaches Moslems to be hospitable to strangers, and they practice this inspired attitude toward all. Islam, like true Christianity, is a living manifestation of a valid "brotherhood of man," in action.

Likewise, a little-known fact to Americans is the historic truth that the ancient ancestors of the Moslems of today, as we know them, were world leaders in architecture, astronomy, geography, mathematics, medicine, poetry, and other leading branches of the sciences and arts at the time when Europeans were still living in mud hovels like the barbarians they were.

There exists a superlative degree of religious harmony among all Moslems. To a greater extent than generally realized, Moslems are engaged in pastoral pursuits. Whether by choice or necessity, Moslems have remained close to "*Mother Earth*." In their soil they see their security, their salvation, and their survival. *Their land is their hope.*

Likewise, a little-known fact to Americans is the historic truth that the ancient ancestors of the Moslems of today, as we know them, were world leaders in architecture, astronomy, geography, mathematics, medicine, poetry, and other leading branches of the sciences and arts at

the time when Europeans were still living in mud hovels like the barbarians they were. The system of numerals in use today throughout the civilized world is a contribution to world culture and progress for which we must acknowledge gratitude to the ancient ancestors of modern Moslems. The land they inhabited was the cradle of our modern civilization.

The 400,000,000 Moslems inhabit the broad stretch of territory extending across North Africa, the Near East, the Middle East, and the Far East from Morocco on the Atlantic to the Philippines in the Pacific. Exclusive of these areas, about 75,000,000 of the 400,000,000 Moslems are integrated populations in the Soviet Union, Red China, the Balkans and other areas behind the "*Iron Curtain*." The 400,000,000 Moslems inhabit every strategic area along the extremely extended "*under-belly*" of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union has resorted to every conceivable strategy to attract into their orbit the 400,000,000 Moslems along their entire "*under-belly*." What is taking place at this very hour in Egypt, Iran, Burma, Indo-China, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and the Malay Straits is the result of agitation in these countries by agents of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is fanning the flame of nationalism in these countries to create revolutions which will result in the creation of numerous additional Communist governments.

The Soviet Union seeks to deprive the Christian world of the friendship of this great reservoir of manpower, the enormous reserves of natural resources, and the strategic areas lying along the Soviet Union's "*under-belly*." They are not exactly fools. This Nation will live to rue the day we permit Soviet Union strategy to convert the believers in Islam from loyal friends into bitter enemies of Christendom. When that becomes an accomplished fact this Nation will drop into the lap of the Soviet Union like a ripe plum. It will be too late to call out the fire engines after the house has burned down. *Our common sense should tell us that, should it not?*

The believers in Islam have as yet not lent themselves to sovietization. The inherently deep and genuine religious fervor of the followers of the Prophet has so far precluded any possibility of the acceptance by them of Communist-bred atheism. They have so far resisted contamination of their political, social, and economic systems with the virus of Communist-incubated atheism with a fortitude worthy of "*spiritual Spartans*." Islam remains immune to atheism.

Islam has truly set an example which the Christian nations of Europe, and the North and South American continents would do well to follow. "*He who knows not the way is a dangerous guide.*" Let us abandon the insidious leadership of United Nations, that international incubator for Communist-bred

going on in the world if humanity is to survive as a society composed of free men.

It is not difficult to understand the confusion which exists today in the minds of Moslems everywhere. These devout aspirants for their liberty and freedom now observe us turning against them, even using United Nations as a bludgeon to beat them into submission. They now see this Nation making common cause with their oppressors and exploiters, within and without United Nations and its numerous agencies, *using words with mortal effect instead of bullets.*

The present hour finds the Moslems entering upon a Twentieth Century Islamic renaissance. The great spiritual forces now reawakened and released will make a great contribution to the progress of mankind. The Islamic world is turning to the Christian world for cooperation and collaboration. They are seeking the friendship and collaboration of the West. They truly trust that it will not be unduly denied. The West will prove itself unworthy of its part in the sacred trusteeship of mankind's spiritual mission if it treats this appeal with indifference. *Or worse still to become accomplices of the oppressors of the Islamic world.*

If as a result of false pride or ignorance we turn away from their outstretched hand we shall live to regret the folly of that act. They may need us now, and we may be able to help them. The time may come when we may need them, and they may be able then to help us. Reciprocity is a basis for human relationships which has been practiced far too little in this world of ours. Reciprocity as the basis for our international relationships has been merely a mirage.

Believers in Islam and follow the example of believers in Islam. *Islam and Christianity have common aims.*

Believers in Islam will never willingly consent to the surrender of their inspiring and compelling faith in God to gain the doubtful benefits accruing to the millions who have accepted the spiritual sovereignty of the Communist-bred atheists. The preponderant majority of those who have already surrendered, unfortunately for Christendom, have been Christians, not Moslems. Take note of that fact please, if you will. Where "*ignorance is bliss*," in my humble opinion, it is not "*jolly to be wise*." To the contrary, it is very necessary to be "*wise*" to what is

atheism. It will grow, and grow, and grow unless Christian and Moslem collaboration immunizes man's mentality against this malignant disease which now threatens civilization's survival.

The *Father in heaven* of Islam and Christianity is a good God. The forces of righteousness can always count upon His help if they help Him in caring for His children here below. The two great religious groups of the world, collaborating in the service of God, will not lack for Divine assistance. God will aid in preserving a climate on this earth which will not preclude nor prohibit worship of Him by those who recognize and accept His spiritual sovereignty.

The Christian churches must invite, *not merely await*, the collaboration of Islam in this program. The Christian churches must go more than halfway in creating this conference. The Christian churches were guilty of errors of omission through the ages even though they were not guilty of errors of commission. It is their Christian duty to give sympathy and consideration for a conference to plan a program for such collaboration. It calls for top priority by all.

In their all-pervading belief in God the Moslems will join their Christian brothers at a round table to sift the ashes of civilization in the attempt to find a spark of spiritual dynamism. The power of belief must vanquish unbelief. Those now in the service of God must resist the anti-Christ.

If Islam and Christianity do not win, the fate of mankind is sealed. The human race is doomed to face a fate more miserable than my vocabulary can do ample justice.

I cannot speak for Islam. I wish I had that privilege. But I can say a few words for the Christian churches and Christianity. The Christian churches must be made to understand that they have been made the innocent victims of a Communist-bred atheist CONSPIRACY to destroy them.

When the debris of Communist-bred atheism has finally been swept into oblivion by the collaboration of Islam and Christianity, world-peace may come to the God-loving peoples of the human race. This reward justifies our struggle.♦

The Muslim Sunrise, Vol. 31. Issue 4, Winter 1952.

The Muslim Sunrise Q&A

1

Is Hell everlasting in Islam?

No. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community – unlike most other sects of Islam and Christianity – firmly believes that Hell is a temporary abode. God has created hell, in His eternal wisdom as *ar Raheem* or The Merciful, as a sort of hospital for the soul. Those spiritual ailments we are unable to cure in this world are made apparent to us in the next, and God, exhibiting His endless attribute of Divine mercy, gives us yet another, albeit painful, opportunity to cleanse ourselves, and be admitted to Heaven, which *is* everlasting.

2

Do Muslims believe in the Bible?

One of Islam's fundamental articles of faith is Belief in God's revealed Books. If one denies the truth of any revealed Book of God, they cannot be a Muslim. God specifically mentions the *Injeel* or Gospel of Jesus^{as} as a revealed Book, in which Muslims believe to this day. Thus, we read:

"And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel which contained guidance and light, fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah; and a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing." (Qur'an 5:47)

However, the Gospel of Jesus^{as} was direct revelation from God to his prophet, whereas the Bible is a book written by Paul and others, which Muslims can use as a relatively accurate historical document at best. The Gospel of Jesus^{as}, like all other revealed Books prior to the Qur'an, was not properly preserved as is now lost. However, by the Grace of God, the eternal truths from pre-Islamic scriptures are forever preserved in the Qur'an.

3 Do Muslims believe in the Immaculate Conception and Virgin Birth?

First, Islam does not ascribe to the notion that humans are born sinful. Rather, all babies, regardless of race, color or creed, are born Muslims – meaning they are in a state of submission to the will of God, following only the laws of nature. Thus, not only was Mary^{ra} born sinless, so were all other humans.

Second, the Qur'an affirms the virgin birth of Prophet Jesus^{as} (3:60). This, however, does not in and of itself entitle him to a share of Divinity. Moreover, Islam teaches there is harmony between religion and science. While mankind may not have the capacity to fully explain the miraculous virgin birth, we are compelled to share two illuminating points:

1. Jesus^{as} was neither the only *prophet* born without a parent(s), nor was he only *child* born of a virgin. The Bible and Qur'an both suggest that Adam^{as} had neither mother nor father, yet he is assigned no share of Divinity. Moreover, numerous cases are on record of children having been born without fathers (Enc. Brit. under "Virgin Birth" and "Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine" published by W.B. Saunders & Co., London).

2. There is a scientific explanation of self-fertilization of eggs that is proven in lower animal species that can, perhaps, also explain the virgin birth of humans, entitled Parthenogenesis. Allah knows best.

4 What is more important in Islam: The Qur'an or Prophet Muhammad^{sa}?

This is a classic case of comparing apples and oranges. Whereas the first is a book, the latter is a person. In Islam, both are the apex in their respective categories, meaning they are the best book and person ever created, as God designated both for all of mankind, whereas previous books and prophets were just for certain people. Moreover, the two are inextricably linked. To illustrate this point, when people asked Ayesha^{ra}, wife of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, about him, she replied,

"He was the Qur'an personified."

As Muslims, we are very thankful to Allah, for both.

5

Did Islam spread by the sword in its early years?

During the Prophet's life, the battles fought by Muslims were against much larger forces seeking to destroy Islam, and thus, were defensive in nature. After the Prophet's passing, as Muslims emigrated from Arabia to many neighboring nations, and as the oppressed people of these places learned of the beneficent and just rule of Islam, they begged the Muslim empire to set them free from their despotic rulers. When all peaceful talks failed, and tyrants of such nations refused to yield their ways, Muslim leadership saw to it that justice was established in these nations. They did not, however, at any time compel the inhabitants of these places to accept Islam, adhering to the clear Qur'anic principle, "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:257).

Once appointed caretakers of these lands, their churches, synagogues and temples received protection, as well as the people themselves. To finance the cost of the administration, Muslim leadership levied a poll tax on the non-Muslims whom they served, entitled *Jizya*. This, along with ample historical evidence recording Christians and Jews ascending to high positions in the public and private sectors of early Islamic societies, supports that Islam did not spread by the sword in its early years.

*Do you have a question on Islam?
On religion?
On God?*

*Email us your questions today, to:
MuslimSunrise@
Ahmadiyya.us*

News, Views and Reviews: Press Publications

Muslim Sunrise contributors have been actively engaged in responding to the American press on articles of religious importance. Some samples of their recent published responses are below:

Letter to the Editor, Harper's Magazine (April 2006), May 3, 2006

Letter to the Editor, Hartford (Connecticut) Courant, May 4, 2006

Letter to the Editor, Wall Street Journal (March 6), March 8, 2006

To the editor and readers:

Regarding the Mar 06 Andrew Higgins article "Blame it on Voltaire: Muslims Ask French to Cancel 1741 Play":

As a Muslim, I am both hurt and dismayed at the current Danish cartoon controversy and other related feuds. On the one hand, I can only shake my head in painful disbelief that journalists and others are really trying to protect such "yellow" sensationalism as freedom of speech. On the other hand, my heart, once again, is breaking to see the ignorant Muslims of the world fall in to the trap of such obvious mischief-making.

Any Muslims even remotely familiar with the forbearing, patient and loving example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) should know that he returned such low abuse with kindness and prayer. Although many instances are recorded in which his followers were fully ready, willing and able to decapitate those who disrespected him (even to his face), he forbid that even a hair on their heads be harmed. The Prophet Muhammad put his complete trust in God to either bring his detractors to the truth or to destroy their evil machinations.

As to the so-called freedom of speech proponents in France and elsewhere, it's a duplicitous for them to pretend that reviving such an inflammatory play (Voltaire's "Fanaticism") is a matter of "Enlightenment" or that drawing despicable pictures of beloved religious figures is a worthy freedom of speech battle to fight.

The truth is that the French, like the rest of Europe, are currently wrestling with their very own souls, tortured with a painful image and memory of religion. They have endured

the corruption, political wrangling, and inquisitions of their own churches for the past several centuries, and have, consequently, given up on the idea of religion and even God. Instead of searching for the true essence of religion and their relationship to the Creator, they have elected to rail against everything sacred in the name of "free speech." This is not only juvenile, but is also indicative of the true degeneration of Europe's morality and mindset.

Instead of picking at each other like children, maybe the so-called "enlightened" of Europe and the fanatical, so-called Muslims should both follow the advice of Candide in Voltaire's 1759 classic and "cultivate their own gardens." This is the same sentiment of the Qur'anic teaching that commands believers to leave disbelievers and detractors to be dealt with by God as He sees fit and focus on their own good deeds.

Let us cultivate our gardens.

Ronald "Abdul Rahim" Hubbs Jr.
Torrance, California

Letter to the Editor, Harper's Magazine (April 2006), May 3, 2006

Dear Sir/Madam:

Mr. Lewis Lapham, in his column entitled "Mute Button" (April 2006), referring to the Prophet Muhammad (sa) "as terrorist" has unfortunately misunderstood the import of the verse, "We shall strike terror into the hearts of those that have disbelieved because they associate partners with Allah (Qur'an, 3: 151)."

The above Qur'anic passage refers to the Battle of Uhud near Medina, where the Meccan idolaters waged war on newly minted Muslims who had fled for safety to Medina due to severe persecution in Mecca at the hands of the Meccans. It was not an offensive battle started by Muslims – a point even many hostile scholars of Islam agree on.

The "We" in the verse refers to God and the placing of "terror in hearts" of the Meccan idolaters to their cowardice in combat when they decided to retreat terror-stricken despite inflicting some significant loss upon the vastly outnumbered Muslims.

The Meccan idolaters were not as brave relative to the Muslims who believed in a one true God, His unlimited powers, and in life after death. When the going got tough, the Meccan idolaters were ultimately unwilling to sacrifice themselves in combat despite being instigators, since psychologically as idolaters they did not have complete devotion to any one being. Moreover, the Meccan idolaters had little perseverance, as they went from one god to another - and perseverance is an essential component of bravery. The wars of the Prophet were all defensive, and there is not a single instance of the Prophet or his companions forcibly trying to convert people to Islam.

Dr. Tahir Ijaz
San Diego, California

Letter to the Editor, Hartford (Connecticut) Courant, May 4, 2006
"Crises Aren't About Religion"

I applaud the efforts of Elie Wiesel in championing the rights of victims of mass violence around the world, most recently in Sudan (May 1, "Wiesel Talks of Sudan Indifference"). However, I take exception to his comment that, "All the crises in the world today have Islam as a component." First, it is unfair to make a minority of extremists claiming to belong to a religion, whether of Islam or another, as representative of the moderate majority. Second, Islam as taught by its holy book the Qur'an and its founder the Prophet Muhammad (sa) never sanctioned humanitarian abuse. Third, most of the crises in the world today are either unrelated to religion or are the result of its misuse for political gain. For example, just over 10 years ago, more than 7,000 men and boys were killed within five days in the town of Srebrenica, Bosnia. The perpetrators were Christians, many of whom legitimized the massacre as a crusade to cleanse Europe of their Muslim neighbors. It would be wrong to ascribe the brutal mass murder to Christianity or all Christians, just as it is wrong to implicate the misdeeds of a few renegade Muslims to Islam and its majority.

Dr. Sohail Husain, MD
Hamden, Connecticut

"True Meaning of Word 'Jihad' is Misunderstood"

Imam Shamshad A. Nasir

The true meaning of jihad is generally misunderstood, as this word becomes part of our vernacular. The scripture of Islam, the Holy Qur'an, makes it obligatory for Muslims to do jihad. It would be wrong to assume that bloodshed of the innocent, and creating disorder, is in any way jihad.

Jihad is an Arabic word meaning to strive, to achieve a grand objective. What grand objective, one might ask? It is the objective of benefiting oneself and the rest of humanity.

It is a general perception in the West that Islam promotes terrorism. The fact is that such actions are totally opposite to what the word "Islam" means. Islam means peace and state of constant submission to the will of God.

There are a couple of reasons why there is such a misconception about Islam. One such reason is the behavior of certain radical

peace and blessings of God be upon him) was the Prince of Peace. Time and time again, he demonstrated utmost graciousness toward his bloodthirsty sworn enemies. One must wonder about the apparent contradiction in the teachings of Islam and the action of some radical Muslims. So, what is the truth about jihad? I will attempt to explain the type of striving permitted in Islam.

In Chapter 25 verse 53 of the Holy Qur'an, God says, "and strive by means of it (the Qur'an) a great striving." Muslims are obligated to do jihad by introducing, through kind words and loving actions, the beautiful teachings of Islam to the whole world.

Another form of striving God makes obligatory for Muslims is self-purification. One needs to constantly strive to cleanse oneself of negative tendencies and influences. The Holy Qur'an, in Chapter 22 verse 79 states, "And strive in the cause of God as it behoves you to strive for it ..." And in Chapter 29 verse 7 states, "And whoso strives, strives only for his own soul; verily, God is Independent of all His creatures."

Another form of jihad, which Muslims are directed to do, is the striving of self-defense. In Chapter 2 verse 191, God says, "And fight

political jostling. One needs to separate politics from religion and deal with political situations with fairness and justice. The present situation needs to be understood with these points.

What type of jihad did the Prophet of Islam do? He spent 13 years in the city of Mecca after declaring to be the messenger of God. When he called people toward God, the opponents of Islam turned against him. They created a whole lot of obstacles for him and made plans to kill him.

Muslims were persecuted, beaten up, tortured, dragged on the burning sand, stomped on their chests, thrown on burning charcoal, socially boycotted. The enemies of Islam did not stop and give up after Muslims migrated to Medina. No, they came after them to annihilate them. It was only then that the Prophet of Islam and his companions did indulge in self-defense.

There is freedom of religion in the Western hemisphere. The Western countries allow Muslims to practice, preach and teach their faith. This is exactly in accordance with the Quranic teachings. Unfortunately, in the Islamic countries today religious freedom is limited and certainly not like the Western countries. Under such circumstances, waging a war in the name of Islam against Western countries is completely prohibited.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim worldwide community rejects the radical view of jihad. They have categorically declared that there is no room for shedding blood in the name of religion. These days the attack on Islam is through the use of pen. The appropriate response to these written and verbal attacks on Islam needs to be responded by pen and cogent arguments.

Where we advise the radical Muslims to refrain from the extremist behavior that defames Islam, we also suggest the authorities dealing with them to always practice fair and just policies and not to usurp the rights of Muslims, which ends up provoking them.

It is wrong to indulge in violent struggles against any country where complete religious freedom is afforded to the Muslims and practice, preaching and teaching of Islam is allowed. The spiritual leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, Mirza Masroor Ahmad, has demanded from Ahmadi Muslims residing in 181 countries to reform themselves, and improve the standard of worship of God. Thus, we invite all to this jihad, and truly this is the only jihad there is.



Muslims, and the other reason is the bias by some in the West against Islam and the ignorance of many throughout the world.

The dreadful picture of Islam that is presented in the West by some, and the concept of jihad that is practiced by some in the Islamic world today, have no basis in the Holy Qur'an, and no example of such practice is found in the life of the Prophet of Islam.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may

in the way of God against those who fight against you, but do not transgress." A religious war can only take place against those who indulge in religious persecution against Muslims and those who coerce Muslims into a different faith.

In the context of the above stated Islamic teachings, to accuse Islam of encouraging warfare is false, unjust and tantamount to inflaming religious bigotry. Whatever is happening in the world today is nothing but

Imam Shamshad A. Nasir is Imam of Baitul Hameed Mosque in Chino, California.



Death for apostasy or blasphemy in Islam?

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's Central Response Committee

Editor's Note:

In March 2006, news from Afghanistan generated major worldwide controversy. Abdul Rahman, an Afghani man who had converted from Islam to Christianity, was arrested by local police and set to be tried for apostasy – a crime punishable by death under Shariah law as applied in Afghanistan. Rahman was eventually released from prison and ultimately granted political asylum in Italy, but not before his case brought to the forefront of Western media debate the issue of apostasy in Islam. What follows is an editorial exchange on the issue printed in the Michigan newspaper, Kalamazoo Gazette. Ayesha Mangla is a Muslim Sunrise contributor.

Replace 'death for apostasy' rule with Qur'an's true teachings:

Kalamazoo Gazette: May 1, 2006

By Ayesha Mangla

Wolfgang Lugauer, in his recent letter, "Moderate Muslims should speak up," rightly questions how Islam, a religion that professes to teach peace and tolerance, could also condone the concept of death for any man deciding to leave it.

Death for apostasy or blasphemy has been occurring in Afghanistan for a long time. It has surfaced in the news now because a Christian was threatened to be put to death. Those "moderate" Muslims should come forward and speak out against this barbaric Shariah code, which is against the teachings of the Qur'an, which clearly states that "there is no compulsion in religion" [2:256].

The main source of Islamic law is the Qur'an, the word of God. The teachings of the Qur'an are interpreted and demonstrated by Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. Thus, the Qur'an, Hadith, which are the recorded sayings of the Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, and Sunnah, his recorded actions, become the three sources from which Islamic law is derived. The Sunnah and Hadith are used to clarify matters that are in the Qur'an. If they contradict the teachings of the Qur'an, then the word of the Qur'an gets precedence. Any other source conflicting with the Qur'an is rejected because of the very fact that it was written many years after the demise of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. The Qur'an, however, has remained unchanged since its inception.

Although the Qur'an does prescribe the death penalty for murderers, it does not do so for apostasy. On the contrary, it says, "Surely those who believe, then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve and then increase in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them nor will He guide them to the right way" [4:138]. The Qur'an also states, "On account of this We prescribed for the Children of Israel that whosoever killed a person – unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land – it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and whoso saved a life, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind" [5:33].

In contrast, the Shariah law condemns the apostate to death. There is a striking similarity between this barbaric provision with the Biblical statement, "Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord, must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death" [Leviticus 24:16].

In essence, the Shariah code is a violation of human rights, decency and civilized behavior. It is inherently prejudicial to women, non-Muslims, and freethinkers and that its laws and their execution go against the spirit, ideals, and teachings of Islam brought by our beloved Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and the Holy Qur'an.

Although claimed to be derived from the Qur'an, there is nothing "divine" about this Shariah code. It is based solely on the misguided legal opinions of medieval Muslims regarding the "sayings" and "actions" of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. Exposing the un-Islamic nature of the Shariah code should be the duty of every "moderate" Muslim, and would be the first step to abolish the violation of human rights in the name of Islam. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has always been in the forefront of condemning such idiocy for more than 100 years.

The ignorance of the Muslim masses, and the vested interest of the Mullah leading them, is sustaining this absurd, outdated, and un-Islamic Shariah code. The Muslim community in Afghanistan and beyond can replace this with the true teachings of the Qur'an and the conduct of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} by accepting their correct interpretation put forth by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} who claimed to be divinely guided in accordance with the prophecy of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} that the Messiah and Mahdi (the Guided One) would bring back the true teachings of Islam and restore its famed glory.

If you have more questions and want to learn more about true Islam, you may log on to www.alislam.org and click on "ask Islam."

Kalamazoo Gazette: June 9, 2006

Apostasy Viewpoint's opinion differs from mainstream Islam

By Nadia Kazmi

I read Ayesha Mangla's Viewpoint in the May 1st *Kalamazoo Gazette* on the topic of apostasy in Islam. The writer should mention that she belongs to the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam, which is followed by fewer than 15 percent of the world's Muslims. To pass opinions as Islamic and then later in the article write that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed claimed to be the divinely guided mahdi is misleading. Ahmadiyya is a minor sect of Islam and it is nowhere near mainstream Islam.

Mangla makes it a point that such rulings are based on hadiths or sayings of the prophet and seems to reject it solely based on the fact that, if a hadith contradicts a verse, it is not applicable. When God says in the Qur'an, "There is no compulsion in religion," scholars of Sunni Islam agree that this means there is no compulsion on non-Muslims to convert to Islam, but once you are a Muslim you accept all rules and regulations of that religion and cannot follow your whims and desires.

Mangla later on argues that Shariah code is un-Islamic. I hope she realizes that an "un-Islamic Shariah code" is an oxymoron. I have no qualms in saying that some countries like Pakistan apply Islamic rulings in their courts haphazardly and the result is a so-called Shariah court that has little to do with Islam. To malign Shariah law as un-Islamic based on her little understanding of mainstream Islam is wrong. If the Ahmadiyya sect does not believe in Shariah law, then say so, but do not expect most mainstream Muslims to agree with you.

Now there is no doubt that the statute on apostasy in Islam is highly controversial and different scholars from different schools of thought have different opinions. First, most schools of thought agree that to be able to declare death for an apostate, there must be an Islamic state. Second, an apostate is only considered for trial in an Islamic Shariah court if the said person openly declares that he has left Islam and is instigating seeds of confusion among Muslims in that state. Third, the said person is given three days to reconsider his or her stance and is counseled about any misunderstandings about Islam. So in essence, all these conditions have to be met in order for a person to be considered for this rule and that, too, is highly debatable.

When the Afghan court was calling for the death of the person, it was wrong in doing so because Afghanistan is not ruled according to correct Shariah laws and we don't know for sure what exactly happened and, unfortunately, there are people out there who are keen to issue fatwas at their own whims and wishes and, at the same time, there are people in the Muslim world who apostate on purpose to seek political asylum in western countries. Also, if apostasy was such a big issue in the Shariah law, why don't we see a lot more ex-Muslims in the Muslim world being prosecuted by that law? It is not like the Muslim world is devoid of atheists, or Muslims who do not practice their religion.

In this time and age, there is no true Islamic state in the Muslim

world, thus those rulings cannot be applied. We can further understand how this law came about if we look at when exactly in the history of Islam this law came about. The prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, imposed these laws at a time of war when people were knowingly accepting Islam only to later leave it on purpose, hence, instilling confusion amongst the general masses of the early Islamic state. This is equivalent to modern-day treason in the military, which is still punishable by death in many nations.

The writer, Nadia Kazmi, resides in Flint, Michigan.

Kalamazoo Gazette: June 22, 2006

Qur'an's teaching, guidance is for all Islamic communities

By Ayesha Mangla

I would like to thank Nadia Kazmi for reading my Viewpoint with interest, providing her comments in her June 9th Viewpoint, "Apostasy Viewpoint's opinion differs from mainstream Islam," and giving me a chance to explain a few points. However, her noting that I belong to a minority group is irrelevant in this case because the references I gave are from the Qur'an, which is the same for all.

Also, being a minority sect of Islam (15 percent, or more than 200 million out of the worldwide Muslim population of 1.6 billion) does not make Ahmadiyyat wrong. It is divinely guided by the Imam Mahdi (the Guided One) and the Promised Messiah as prophesied by the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The "mainstream Muslims" are still awaiting this Mahdi and Promised Messiah to appear. The first Messiah's followers were in a minority in the beginning as well; Jesus Christ had only 12 disciples when he was put on the cross. It took three centuries for his followers to flourish.

God Almighty guarantees the safety of the Qur'an when he says, "Surely, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and We will, most certainly, safeguard it (15:10)." This means that the text of the Qur'an will always be preserved intact. There is no such guarantee for hadith, the sayings of the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h), because they were collected and recorded years after his demise, and some may have been passed down incorrectly. Thus if a hadith contradicts the Qur'an, it must be rejected. The bulk of hadith do not contradict the Qur'an. Regarding apostasy, there is only one hadith that is extremely controversial, with inherent contradictions, and comes from a relatively obscure source.

According to Kazmi, "there is no compulsion in religion (2:257)" only applies to non-Muslims who do not even believe in the Qur'an, while Muslims are exempt from it even though they believe in the truth of the Qur'an. What an absurd and irrational interpretation of this Qur'anic verse! I am grateful to her for specifying that this belief is held by scholars of Sunni Islam only.

Freedom of conversion is the confirmation of "no compulsion in religion." It cannot be a one-way freedom – the freedom to enter Islam, but not to leave it. The Qur'anic verse that I quoted in my original May 1 article, "Surely those who believe, then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve and then increase in disbelief..." (4:138) provides that freedom. A dead person would not have that freedom. It puts no restriction on a Muslim's freedom to leave Islam.

Kazmi's logic is self-defeating. A leading scholar, Ghulam Ahmad Parvez, referring to this Maududian (Sunni) commentary on this Qur'anic verse, said "Maududi's Islam is a mouse-trap: the mouse can get into it, but cannot escape." Even if we accept Kazmi's premise that this verse only applies to non-Muslims, then a person who leaves Islam would again come under the application of this verse!

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community believes in the Islamic Shariah brought only by the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and not the one brought by the medieval jurists. Shariah code promulgated by the "mainstream Muslims" of today is un-Islamic because some of its laws are against the teachings of the Qur'an. There are 10 direct references to recantation in the Qur'an: one in the Meccan chapter of *Al-Nahl* and the remaining nine in the Medinite chapters. In none of these verses is there the slightest hint of capital punishment for those who apostate. Also, numerous instances of blatant apostasy at the time of Prophet Mohammad^{sa} were completely ignored by him; the only apostates executed were the ones guilty of murder or complicity in murder.

Kazmi does not give any reference from the Qur'an to support her views that death for apostasy is legal in "mainstream Islam," yet she objects to an Ahmadi Muslim proving it un-Islamic with references from the Qur'an. We call it un-Islamic precisely due to our deep and honest study of the tolerance and respect for the freedoms of conscience, faith and practice of religion demonstrated by the Holy Prophet of Islam, peace be on him.

Although he knew that Abdullah bin Obeye bin Sulool was a leader of the *Munafiqun* (hypocrites), Prophet Muhammad^{sa} did not allow anyone to kill him, despite numerous demands from his followers. God had told him that he would not forgive such hypocrites even if the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} prayed 70 times for their forgiveness. Nonetheless, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said he would pray more than 70 times for them, and upon Abdullah's death he went to his funeral and prayed at his grave. This was the treatment and freedom of religion given by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} to people who were his deadly enemies.

Kazmi's statement that the converting person "is given three days to reconsider his or her stance and is counseled about any misunderstandings about Islam" is derogatory to the true spirit of Islam. One should not have to accept Islam under duress. This gives credence to allegations that Islam was spread through force, whereas the truth is exactly the opposite. Islam spread in Indonesia, Malaysia, China and India, areas comprising the largest Muslim populations, without a conquering army, whereas vast regions under the rule of the Ottoman Empire never converted.

Kazmi's own admittance that "there is no true Islamic state in the Muslim world" even after the passage of 1,400 years, should be a wake-up call for "mainstream Muslims" to realize that Islam has reached a low point in history. In fact, the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} even said that "there would be a time when the religious scholars of Islam would be the worst creatures on Earth, mosques would seem to be crowded but devoid of true knowledge, the faith will ascend to Pleiades at which time a man from Persia will bring it back and restore the famed glory of Islam." Given the current state of Islam, it seems that time has arrived.

Ayesha Mangla resides in Portage, Michigan and often writes about Islam. ♦

News, Views & Reviews: Book Review

What Went Wrong?: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East (Oxford University Press, 2003)

By Amjad Mahmood Khan, Esq.

Considered by many to be a seminal work in the burgeoning body of post-9/11 literature concerning Islam, Bernard Lewis's *What Went Wrong?* (Oxford University Press, 2003) aims to historicize the Muslim Middle East as a way to explain the present world situation. Terse and insightful, the book ultimately fails to deliver a nuanced analysis of a topic of vital significance.

Lewis's thesis is essentially two-fold. First, the Islamic Civilization in the Middle East, while once expansive and dominant, imploded once it became squarely pitted against Western Christendom. Accordingly, as Lewis puts it: "[T]he world of Islam had become poor, weak, and ignorant" (p.151). Second, the reformists within the Islamic Civilization of the Middle East – what Lewis calls "modernizers" (p.165) – failed to bring valuable reforms to Islam within the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. The result is what we see today: a powerful and organized militant manifestation of Islam that is angry, disillusioned, ignorant, and dangerous.

In proving his thesis, Lewis frequently falls flat in his analysis. First, Lewis struggles to define terms with precision. He repeatedly refers to the "Islamic world" while his point of analysis is the Muslim Middle East. In so doing, he misleads the reader into thinking that his contentions apply broadly to Islam. Glaringly absent from his analysis is any discussion of the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent (over 400 million in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan) or Indonesia (some 230 million). By failing to account for these nations, Lewis necessarily overlooks the existence of moderate Muslim movements or "modernizers" in these nations.

Second, Lewis ignores the complexity of the intra-religious milieu during the time



For example, Arab scholars in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries introduced Aristotle, in Arabic translation, to the Islamic world. Indeed, the famed Twelfth Century Spanish-Arab philosopher Averroes studied and commented on Aristotle, and Muslims at the time studied Aristotelian ideas on poetics, politics, and physics.

themselves in Europe.

Third, Lewis fails to acknowledge the intellectual synergy between Muslims in the Middle East and Christians in the West. He asserts repeatedly that Muslims in the Middle East refused to adopt Western science, culture, and innovation and points out how the West studied Arabic, while the Muslim Middle East refused to even study Western social and political thought (p.138-39). This, of course, is inaccurate. For example, Arab scholars in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries introduced Aristotle, in Arabic translation, to the Islamic world. Indeed, the famed Twelfth Century Spanish-Arab philosopher Averroes studied and commented on Aristotle, and Muslims at the time studied Aristotelian ideas on poetics, politics, and physics.

Fourth, Lewis mischaracterizes the Muslim Middle East as being inimical to women's rights. "The emancipation of women is Westernization," he writes, "which is a betrayal of true Islamic values" (p.73). This is not so. For example, a powerful women's movement in Iran began in 1850. One of the main arguments Iranian Muslim women advanced was that gender equality was purely Islamic, but religious literature was misread and misappropriated by misogynist interest-oriented males. In 1996, over two-hundred women ran for the 270-seat parliament in Iran, and fourteen won. By 1997, four women registered to run for the presidency, and five months later then president-elect Muhammad Khatami appointed a female vice president – an immunologist from Tehran. The "emancipation of women," as Lewis describes it, is not a Western concept. Women have certainly struggled, often successfully, to create political space in the Muslim Middle East.

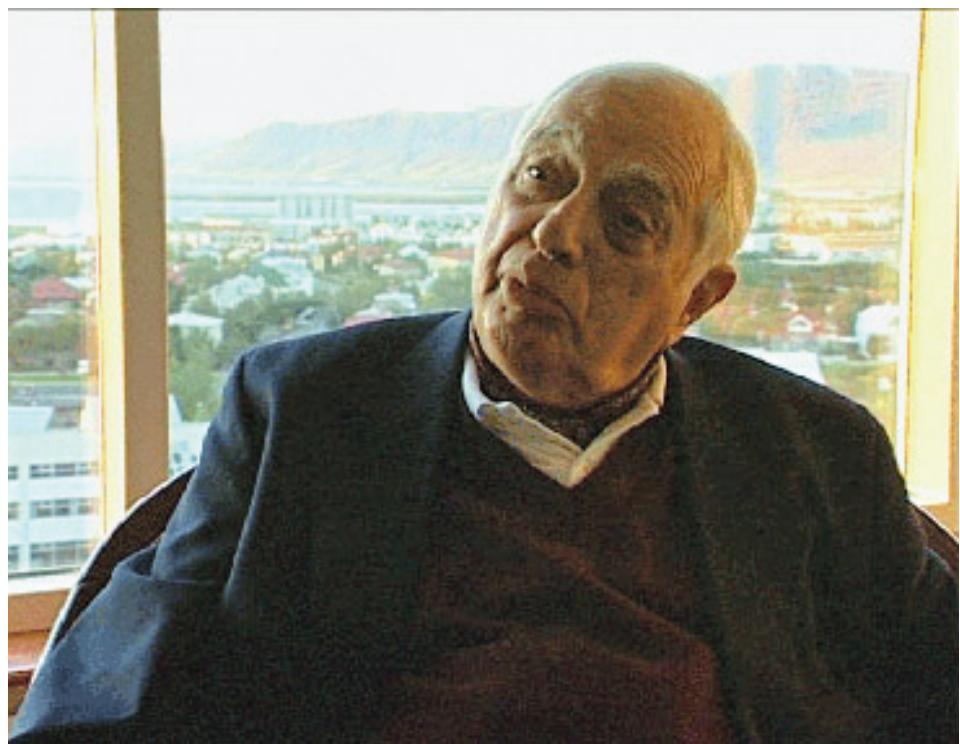
Fifth, Lewis erroneously implies that the Muslim Middle East resisted Western industrialization and capitalism (p.47). Several factors in the Middle East place a strain on foreign investment. First is the costs of preserving a functioning military in the Middle East.

Whatever one might say about the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Middle Eastern countries have had to invest in defense over other areas of growth. Second, it is difficult for industrialization to keep pace with the huge population growth in the Middle East. Third, at least in the last fifty years, there have been efforts by the Middle East to create self-growth. For example, the light textile industry in Turkey has had some success. And Iran has certainly endeavored to open up trade with the West, including the U.S. Ironically it is the West that has resisted trade with Iran.

Sixth, Lewis downplays the European colonization of the Muslim Middle East. "The Anglo-French interlude was comparatively brief and ended a half century ago," Lewis writes, "[T]he change for the worse began long before their arrival and continued unabated after their departure. . . . the attempt to transfer guilt to America remains unconvincing" (p.153). But the French ruled Algeria from 1830 to 1962. The British were in South Asia from 1757 to 1922. The British formally ruled Egypt from 1882-1922. The British did not leave the Persian Gulf until 1962. At what point can one accuse the Muslim Middle East of shunning "the infidel" when it was itself ruled by "the infidel" for so long?

Seventh, Lewis wrongly discounts the moderate impulse within the Muslim Middle East. He writes: "Muslims developed no secularist movement of their own" (p.103). Not so. In Iran, the National Front of the 1940s and 1950s was quite secular. Mustafa Kamal, the famous World War I war hero whose movement spawned the founding of Turkey in 1923, preached a secular view of Islam. After World War II, Turkey had no sultanate or caliphate, which the Ottomans had instituted for nearly 600 years. Even today people refer to "Kamalism" as an ideology opposed to the Ottomans. One of the main founders of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq, Michel Aflak, a Christian, borrowed the philosophy of French historian and scholar Ernest Renan to justify the use of Islam for secular and political ends.

In reading Lewis's work, it is clear that a careful appraisal of moderate Muslim movements is lacking in Western scholarship studying Islam. Undoubtedly a militant, perverse terrorist movement exists in the world that draws its political and economic capital from Islamic theology and dogma. Scholars like Lewis see this as a



Bernard Lewis's *What Went Wrong?*

In reading Lewis's work, it is clear that a careful appraisal of moderate Muslim movements is lacking in Western scholarship studying Islam. Undoubtedly a militant, perverse terrorist movement exists in the world that draws its political and economic capital from Islamic theology and dogma. Scholars like Lewis see this as a product of Islam slowly disintegrating and imploding in response to Western hegemony.

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But this is a decidedly bleak and unfair outlook of Islam. Moderate Islam is not a new and weak phenomenon. There has always been struggle between militants and moderates within Islam. What is woefully inadequate today is effective support from the West for Muslim minorities in Muslim countries. Because the West has for so long ignored the "other" within Islam, what has gone wrong is the unchecked ascendancy of militant Islamist movements. Lewis does not set-up for us a plausible, practical outlet by which moderate Islam may be strengthened. Indeed, by ignoring the

complexity of the Muslim Middle East, he is simply incapable of finding hope in moderate Islam. In the final analysis, this is his book's greatest failing.♦

Amjad Mahmood Khan earned his JD at Harvard University Law School and is a practicing attorney in Los Angeles, California. His review is based on a lecture he delivered at Claremont McKenna College on May 4, 2005.

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The Muslim Sunrise Interview

Rev. Diana Mason Facemyer, Pastor,
St. Thomas United Methodist Church
Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Please tell our readers a little about yourself.

My name is Diana Facemyer. I have been a member of United Methodist clergy for thirty-four years. I was born and raised in New York City. I am the middle daughter of three, born to working class parents. No clergy in the family that we know of, except me. I went to school at University of Buffalo for my undergraduate degree. I was a philosophy major; and from there I went to seminary at Northwestern University.

What inspired you to join the clergy?

This is not a very inspiring truth, but the truth is that as a young child I was captivated by worship, just captivated by worship. When I was a child, I worshipped at a very large church in New York City. It was a very formal traditional church, and was replete with clergy, choirs, robes, processions, processional crosses and the Bible bearers. It looked like a Cecil B. Demille production! I was captivated! I remember as an early child, I used to sneak out of Sunday school and go up the balcony of the sanctuary where I

used to love worship. I believe the truth is that from the youngest age I knew that the worship of God was very important to people because all of that elegant stuff was required to bring people together for worship on Sunday morning. I knew as a little child that my heart belonged to God and someday I wanted to be part of that. There are pastors that you will talk to that would say that it was in their mid-life that they experienced the call of God and changed careers, and went in. But for me it was the call of my heart as a young child. At the time the United Methodist Church was not ordaining women, so I didn't know where that call would be leading me; but I think from my earliest remembrance I knew that my life would be spent somehow related to worship in the Church.

Did you encounter any resistance before you were ordained in the church?

Well, actually, in the United Methodist Church it was forbidden until 1956 for women to become ordained; so I was one of the firsts. When I was ordained in 1972, it was fairly early on in the process. There was a good deal of resistance both at the local church level to receive women pastors and at the denominational level where Bishops and District Superintendent had the responsibility of appointing pastors once they were ordained. They knew there would be resistance on the part of congregations and so there was resistance all around. And the resistance was both ecclesiastical and Biblical. There are traditions, Biblical traditions in our faith that need to be responded to receive the appointment of clergy women. O, yes, there was resistance.

How does the Methodist Church differ from other Christian denominations?

The United Methodist Church began as a movement within the Anglican Church. John Wesley (1703-71) the founder of the Methodist Church was really ordained and died an Anglican clergy person. His movement called "Methodism" eventually in this country separated from the Anglican Church in England and became its own denomination, in large part because of the style of the movement that was associated with it. John Wesley as an Anglican priest eventually was forbidden to preach in Anglican Churches in Great Britain because his movement was so oriented towards the poor and those that lived on the fringes of religion and society. His movement had a lot to do with the joining of piety and the practice of social justice. In that regard his movement separated over time from the Anglican tradition. It has so much of social impetus along with the Gospel.

Why is it called "Methodist"?

Because John and his brother formed a society while they were going through their training, and their approach to spiritual disciplines was very "methodical." So, while they were in school, the name "Methodist" was attached to this group of young men that were studying to go into the clergy because of the very disciplined methodical lifestyle that they led, and it just stayed with it.

What are some of the major differences between United Methodists and other Christians such as Catholics

The first thing that I definitely want to say is that we have whole lot more in common with other Christian denominations than we have not in common. But I would think that some major differences have to deal with exactly that Wesley enjoining piety and social justice practice. The Methodists feel very strongly that to be a Christian is to live Christian life, and to live a Christian life is to be active in the world. And secondly, and I think very importantly, the communion table of the Methodist Church is open. It is not a close communion. You do not have to be a United Methodist to be at communion table here. You have to be only closer in your understanding of God and your relationship to Jesus Christ. In the Methodist Church that table where we celebrate Holy Communion is understood to be the Lord's Table, and not the denominational table. I think you find it to be different in other denominations. They really do think it is denominational table and if you are unable to espouse their denominational theological line, you are not really welcome to the table.

For Muslims and others who may not have such a tradition, can you please explain what is meant by "communion" and "communion table"?

It is a sacramental memorial of the last night that Jesus spent with his disciples when they were together, we believe, celebrating the Passover meal as was the Jewish custom. And he at that meal, in preparation for his finally leaving them, transformed that meal into a sacramental meal suggesting that from this point forward as they gathered to share the wine and break the bread it would be in remembrance of him. So he took the traditional Jewish elements of the bread and the wine of the Passover, a symbol of freedom that always stood for the Jewish people, and transformed that into the freedom of new life in his body and blood



for the Christians. In the Catholic Church as you know they believe that in the prayer that consecrates the communion elements on a particular day, somehow mysteriously that bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. In the Methodist Church it stands for as a symbol.

So, according to Christian tradition, Jesus^{as} used to drink wine?

Absolutely!

Wasn't it prohibited in the Old Testament?

No. There is an interesting Proverb that talks about being "imbiber" – those who drink too much wine; but certainly Jesus and his disciples drank wine. His first miracle recorded in Scriptures is his changing water into wine at a wedding.

What's your opinion about the present day controversy created by *The Da Vinci Code*?

It is a really good novel. It is intriguing, it is engaging, and in no way, shape or form is it Scripture! I think the novel is a great read, and it's being mixed up with religion. It's not. For generations there have been ongoing movements that rise and fall in Christian scholarly societies wondering about the relationship between Jesus and

Mary Magdalene for sure. But it has always only been speculations and possibilities. Then it falls as quickly as it rises and hundred years later it comes back in a new form. So it is an ancient intrigue; but is not historical and certainly not Biblical.

Does not the discipleship of Mary Magdalene and her close relationship with Jesus^{as} help the feminine leadership in the Church?

That argument intrigues me. Let me say a few things. Three things I would say: Interestingly, the incarnation happened through a woman –

God's coming into the world in a form of the WORD. It was Mary, a woman, who gave birth to the WORD of God in the world. It was the women at the tomb who first heard the testimony of the angels about the resurrection and was told to go and tell the men. In the Holy Book there are very clear references to the fact that women traveled with the disciples, they were the financial backers of the movement, and they no doubt cooked the Last Supper, the meals. They took care of their clothes. Women have always been part of the life the Church. You don't need Mary Magdalene as a person to say just because of Jesus's relationship with her, women have importance in the Church. The truth is that when one looks at the life of Jesus, he always had a very compassionate overview of dealing with women as with men. So, I don't think you need Mary Magdalene to stick out as one person around whom to tell that story. Women were important part of Jesus's story – from birth to death and beyond.

The point made is that all the disciples chosen by Jesus^{as} are portrayed to be men, and no woman reached that stature. If Mary Magdalene was one of his disciples, the position of women in the Church is

changed. That's why it is said that the male disciples of Jesus^{as} intentionally tried to degrade Mary Magdalene's spiritual stature. Isn't that a fact?

I think there may be something to that on a general basis, because certainly in the beginning when the disciples were at work around the world spreading Jesus's story, there were many women who were associated to those early days. And of course, Jesus's own mother was apparently a part of Jesus's movement – from the beginning, right to Pentecost and beyond. I think when the Church became institutionalized with Constantine, men started to exclude women. There was, for instance, in the Apostles days an Order called the Order of Widows and the Order of Deaconesses that women were very much a part of. But again, after the Church was no longer a persecuted movement, but became the religion of State, then the men slowly but surely started to de-emphasize the role of women, and women started to move more into the periphery and the shadows of the things and not center-stage.

Is it correct to say that some three hundred years after Jesus^{as}, during the era of the Roman king Constantine, that Christian scholars were brought together to decide the official religion of the State? Those men then selected a few of the Gospels that suited the political-religious establishment of that time and rejected other Gospels?

That is right. It is a canonization process. The Jewish Scriptures went through a canonization process, the council of Jamnia, I think, finally settled which of the scriptures would be collected and authorized as the authoritative Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible. And so it was, also, that later on the authoritative Scriptures of the Christian

Bible were [selected] similarly by a council. In the process, books do get eliminated that don't meet the standard of the canon.

Then how can the Church say that the books (or Gospels) discarded by men of a particular era, who might well be under political pressure of a



Roman king, had no element of truth in them?

I don't know if they don't have any element of truth. What I know is the twenty-six books that we currently have as the part of the Protestant Bible, different from the Catholic Bible, are among those that did incorporate the standard of canon. There was so much material about Jesus and his life and letters from various leaders of the early Church that were circulated among people of that movement in that day, surely not all of them had contained solely the wisdom of God and not the wisdom of men. By what standard were those twenty-six books specifically chosen, I am not scholarly enough to know for certain. But I do know that in the process there were movements afoot that tried to get other portions of Scriptures to be and in an attempt to purify the theology of the Church some were labeled as heretical and some were labeled as pure. That the process itself was not pure, I think we can agree on it.

How many Books are missing in the Methodist Bible as compared with the Catholic Bible?

Maybe sixteen.

When there is more than one version of the Bible, and sixteen Books missing in one Bible, evidently human editing has taken place in compilation of these Bibles. Then, how do you explain that the Bible is the Word of God?

I think the people in the United Methodist tradition do not consider themselves, by and large, as Biblical literalists. But let me explain that. We try very hard not to worship the words of Scripture, but to worship the One Truth that that the words of the Scripture disclose. In the process of thousands of years of putting first what was oral tradition, then into the language, having that language transcribed by imperfect human-beings down through the centuries, as different cultures and languages brought their interpretations to it, I am sure it is not pristinely the same. Once it was written down, the spirit of the will and purpose of God is purely there. That's why we consider it the word of God. We don't consider it the WORDS of God; we consider it the TRUTH of God, the purpose of God, the will of God as transmitted to a very imperfect human procedure from generation to generation.

Having a Mosque across the street from your Church, do you feel any difference in your congregation's perception of Islam and Muslims?

Certainly! There is no doubt about it. You need somebody face to face to fall in love with that face. Then you become interested in whom they are. And you can't help that. I think you can only dislike or hate a face you cannot see. The face has the image of God implanted on it. So, when you look at your neighbors, you wonder about your neighbors. And until you can see the face



Rev. Diana Facemyer is a regular participant in interfaith dialogues hosted by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

of the neighbor, you are not interested. I hunch that this Church and that congregation would have recognized God in each other face had not 9/11 happened. But since it did, it brought us together faster.

What prompted you to invite the Ahmadiyya Congregation to your Church after the tragedy of 9/11?

Instead of being fearful, we chose to know each other. We held a meeting that very Saturday and decided to meet our neighbor, to invite them. And the response we had imagined was that only a handful of good people might come; that we hoped. To have the enormous outpour of response that we did, was – people still get tears while talking about it today.

What are the areas you think in which Christians and Muslims can work together?

Every issue that is an issue of justice and goodness for God's people are areas where Christians and Muslims can work together – whether it is homelessness or hunger, or jobs. Right now, we are taking baby steps,

as we are working at blood-drives together and when we are working on paths together. But I see the future as wide open. And we must do this. This is something we must do. Now that we see God's face in each other, we must be about God's work together.

What are the steps that the Church and the Mosque can take together?

We must continue fellowship. Fellowship is the basis of it all – to know each other, like each other and respect each other. And that's the foundation for everything we intend to do together. But I am hopeful that our mission work together will expand, and it will become a model of interfaith mission. So much mission work is either denominational centered, or one specific religious family centered, but INTERFAITH MISSION WORK is still a new idea for people. I hope we can become models of it.

With your closing remarks in this interview, as a Christian leader, would you like to address the Muslims?

I want to say a word about the recent

history at St. Thomas. I want to say that we received a special blessing when you came to celebrate our groundbreaking event. It was of course your presence, but let me be clear. It was also your words. We will always remember that you called all land holy land! We will always remember you reminding us that we were all Children of Abraham. We will always be blessed by the images you gave us that helped solidify who we are and why we feel so passionately about our relationship with you. And I would like other folks to know that there is a joy in this kind of shared relationship. There are blessings that cannot be named. There is respect and goodness that comes from these kinds of relationships that I would wish every faith community that I know of.

Thank you so much for your time. It was a tremendous pleasure to sit with you. ♦

Rev. Diana Facemyer and her congregation opened their church to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community for Friday prayer services during the construction of the Ahmadiyya mosque located across the street from the Methodist Church.

A guiding light for humanity

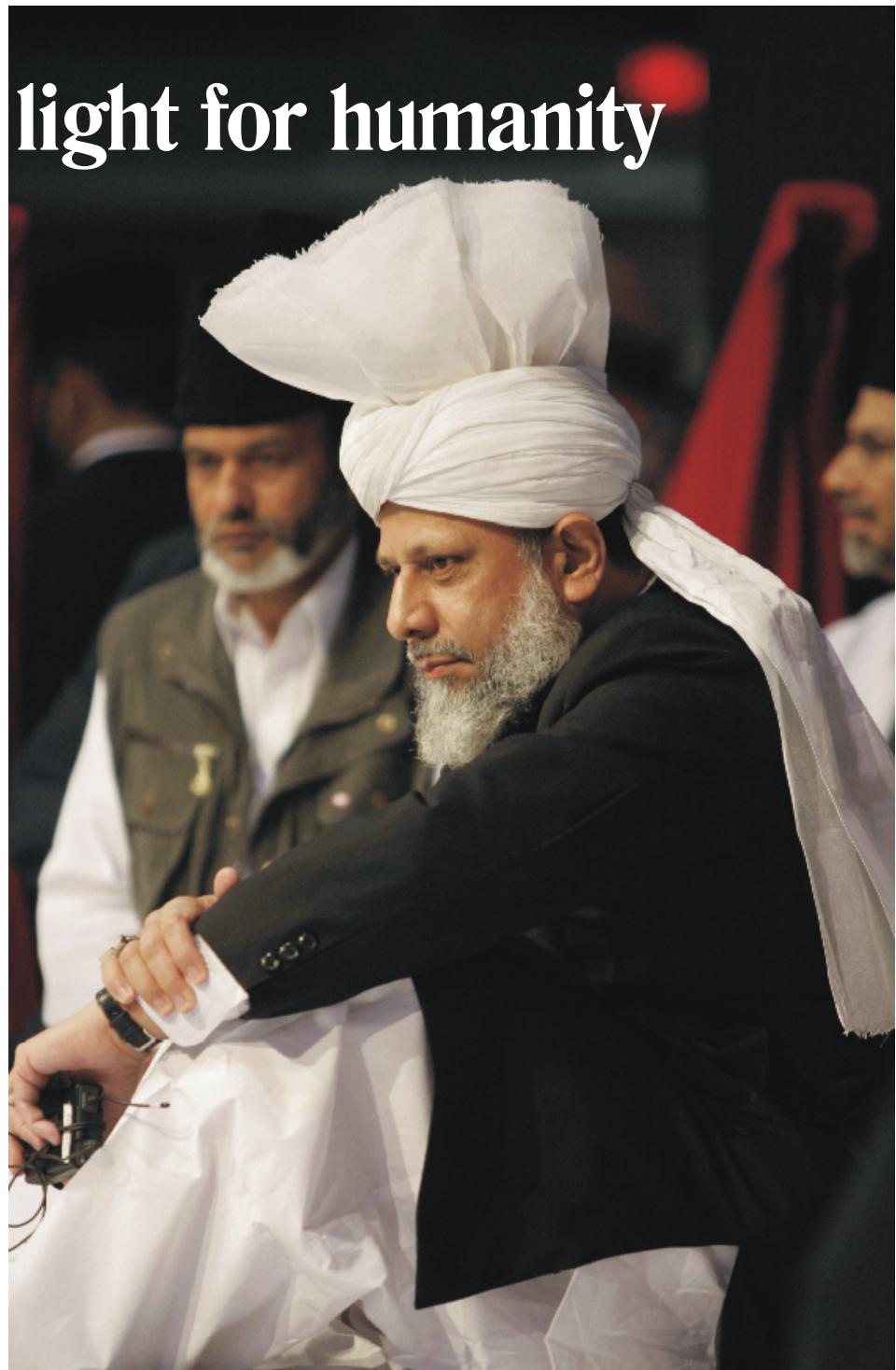
Summary of the Friday Sermon delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, on March 10th, 2006. "aba" is an abbreviation for the prayer *ayyuda hullah binasrihil aziz* (May Allah strengthen his hand).

Ihis Friday sermon, Khalifa-tul Masih V (Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah) presented the lofty principles of tolerance as personified by the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} fourteen hundred years ago, which remain a guiding light for us in this day and age.

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba} started his sermon with the ironic non-Muslim objection that the Holy Prophet^{sa}, God forbid, had brought a religion that offered nothing more than harshness and killing; and that there is no concept of religious tolerance or freedom in Islam. This misperception has been alleged across the general Muslim population and is wrongfully promoted as being embedded within the Muslim psyche.

Ahmad^{aba} reiterated, as he had several times before, the unfortunate circumstances in which factions of radical Muslims have aided these misperceptions with their repeated violations of the Islamic code of conduct. These Muslims fail to realize how they have misrepresented the teachings of our beloved master, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

Contrary to this behavior, the Islamic teachings promoted in the Holy Qur'an repeatedly emphasize the rights of non-Muslims, justice, freedom in matters of religion etc. Fighting is permitted only



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, *Khalifatul Masih V* (Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah) delivers a weekly sermon on Friday, which is broadcast throughout the world on Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA).

...the Islamic teachings promoted in the Holy Qur'an repeatedly emphasize the rights of non-Muslims, justice, freedom in matters of religion etc. Fighting is permitted only at specific times with restricted conditions.

at specific times with restricted conditions. In the time of the Holy Prophet, the Pagan Meccans created a hostile environment and declared war upon the weak and fledgling Muslim community. Only after thirteen long years of patiently enduring persecution and horrific atrocities, were they granted permission in the Holy Qur'an. Today the actions of the 'Jihadi' organizations have encouraged deceitful attacks on humanity's most supreme benefactor, who rarely missed an opportunity to ease his enemy's burden, even in times of war.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} personified compassion in all aspects of his life. He was exemplary in promoting freedom of conscience. He demonstrated the greatest display of compassion when he marched triumphantly back into Mecca and granted general amnesty and freedom of religion to all; thus, fulfilling the Quranic injunction that there should be no compulsion in religion (2:257).

Ahmad^{aba} recalled the extreme oppression endured by the Holy Prophet for the thirteen years he lived in Mecca following his claim to prophethood. He was pelted with stones when he preached at Ta'if. He witnessed the cruelties perpetrated against his most devoted followers, until at last, they were forced to seek refuge in the city of Medina. This migration (*hijra*) was then followed by invasion attempts by the pagans of Mecca. However, in the face of all of this hostility, the Holy Prophet adhered to the loftiest principles of moral conduct and courtesy – even in battle.

It is commonly said that all is fair in war. However, during the Battle of Badr, the Muslims had encamped by a water-spring as a strategic point. A few pagans from the tribe of Quraish came by to get some water, but some Muslims would not allow it. The Holy Prophet restrained his Companions and allowed his enemies unconditional access to the water. This was simply the Holy Prophet's habit of upholding high human values, although he was fully cognizant of the fact that these were bloodthirsty enemies who

The Holy Prophet Muhammad personified compassion in all aspects of his life. He was exemplary in promoting freedom of conscience. He demonstrated the greatest display of compassion when he marched triumphantly back into Mecca and granted general amnesty and freedom of religion to all; thus, fulfilling the Quranic injunction that there should be no compulsion in religion (2:257).



...the Jihadi organizations should seek guidance from the Prophet's example in that actions should not be taken without the permission of the country's government.

had crossed the desert to destroy him and his fledgling community.

Ahmad^{aba} then related the incident of Ikrima, the son of Abu Jahl, who was notoriously known as Islam's most vicious enemy. After the Holy Prophet's victory of Mecca, Ikrima expected to be executed for his numerous crimes against innocent Muslims. He fled towards Yemen, however his wife begged mercy for him from the Holy Prophet^{sa}. The Holy Prophet conceded and forgave Ikrima. Ikrima's wife

tracked him down and convinced him to return to the Holy Prophet. When Ikrima came in the presence of the Holy Prophet^{sa} the Prophet stood up as a mark of respect for him in his capacity as the leader of the enemy. Ikrima, still in disbelief that he was forgiven, wanted confirmation of his clemency, and that his pardon was on the grounds that he stayed firm in his own faith. When the Holy Prophet confirmed this to be true, Ikrima was so immensely moved, that he embraced Islam. This is how Islam

was spread - with love and civility; while maintaining religious freedom and freedom of conscience.

Ahmad^{aba} explained the freedom the Holy Prophet^{sa} afforded slaves. The Holy Prophet disliked slavery and after marrying his wife Hadhrat Khadija^{ra}, he was presented with her wealth and slaves. The Holy Prophet made it clear to her that he would free all the slaves. She responded that he could do what he liked and indeed the Prophet freed all the slaves.

One of these slaves, named Zaid^{ra}, refused to accept his freedom and stayed on with the Prophet. When Zaid's long lost family - who turned out to be very wealthy - tracked him down in Mecca and came to get him, Zaid's love for the Holy Prophet^{sa} would not allow him to return home to his real family. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet adopted him as his own son.

In another event, the Prophet affectionately asked a Jewish slave on his deathbed to believe in Islam. The Holy Prophet's compassion for people and saving their souls was blind to their status, creed, or color.

The rule of the Holy Prophet^{sa} ensured the protection of his subjects' feelings. Ahmad^{aba} cited the incident of a Muslim and Jew who quarrelled over whose prophet was granted greater excellence, and the Muslim slapped the Jew in anger. When the matter was taken to the Prophet he decided in the Jew's favor and admonished the Muslim not to give

The Holy Prophet Muhammad: A guiding light for humanity

him preference over other prophets.

In other incidents, the Prophet stood up as a mark of respect as a Jewish funeral procession passed by; and at the victory of Khyber he ordered the return of some discovered Torah manuscripts to the Jews despite their earlier attitude.

The Holy Prophet drafted a pact between the Jews and the Muslims of Medina. It granted constituents of faiths the right to religious freedom and to live in mutual kindness, free from oppression. Any disagreements would be brought to the Holy Prophet for decision and each decision would be made in accordance with the respective party's religious law. As the Holy Prophet^{sa} was the Commander-in-Chief, it was stated that no one would go to war without his permission. Ahmad^{aba} stated that the 'Jihadi' organizations should seek guidance from the Prophet's example in that actions should not be taken without the permission of the country's government.

The pact stated that if any people

fought against the Jews or the Muslims, they would help each other, and if Medina were attacked, everyone would unite in its defense, and that the Jews would not enter into any pact with the Quraish of Mecca.

Ahmad^{aba} also related the incident when the Holy Prophet offered a visiting Christian delegation from Najran his own mosque in Medina to perform their worship. The Prophet made it incumbent upon the Muslims to protect Christian churches and property, as well their right to worship.

Ahmad^{aba} reiterated the supreme example of compassion and forgiveness as set forth by the Holy Prophet^{sa} after the victory of Mecca and invoked a thousand salutations and blessings upon him. The sermon was concluded with a prayer that may God enable us to act according to this teaching. ♦

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The Holy Qur'an and Family Relationships



Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Humans Rights states: “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.” Government-funded programs to prevent child abuse, use of drugs, unwanted pregnancies do not work because they do not treat the source of the problem: the breakdown of family life.

Dr. Aziza Rahman, Ph.D

Family relationships play an enormous role in our lives. They affect us right from the moment of our birth to the time we leave this world and even after that in the way we are remembered. Our relationships with our parents, siblings and spouses can deeply influence the way we think, the way we interact with others and the way we view ourselves and the world. That is why the family, which consists of a domestic group of people typically affiliated by birth or marriage, is such a central institution and has survived in one form or another from earliest times.

Even more crucial, the family forms the basis of society, and the health of society depends on the strength of the family unit. Little wonder, then, that Islam, the most comprehensive religion in the world, has provided guidelines for this important aspect of our lives. It gives us rules and commands which pertain not only to individual behavior, but also to societal behavior. No matter how materially and technologically advanced it is, no society or culture can avoid breakdown of social and moral values if it ignores its spiritual, ethical and moral well-being.

Unfortunately, we are in the midst of

such a crisis in the present society where the sanctity of the family unit is seriously threatened. Broken marriages, divorce, adultery, domestic violence, child abuse and escalating crime all result from this problem. It seems that neither governments nor social leaders can come up with any lasting solution, even though Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Humans Rights states: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." Government-funded programs to prevent child abuse, use of drugs, unwanted pregnancies do not work because they do not treat the source of the problem: the breakdown of family life.

There is, however, a different alternative, one that works. Islam has positive solutions, found in the Holy Qur'an and traditions from the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), that provide protection and security for the family unit. These guidelines promote a healthy, moral and secure environment where children can be raised, the natural desires of men and women are safeguarded and where virtues like love, kindness and mercy can be fostered. Many family values have been eroded by today's fast pace of life and unending desire for material achievement. Family members are drifting apart, each in the pursuit of their own desires. The outcome is that people are too busy to make the time or effort to develop and nurture the relationships that are so vital to family life, resulting in lack of consideration for other's feelings and selfishness.

Islam's first and foremost rule is that we cannot forget that we are all members of the same family, are created by the same Creator and that one of our duties to Him is to treat each other with love, kindness and respect. The Holy Qur'an reminds us of this reality when it says:

O ye people! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul and of its kind created its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women, and fear Him particularly respecting the ties of kinship. Verily, Allah watches over you." (4:2)

Islam emphasizes accountability to God in all areas of our lives. In other words, we are answerable to God even in the way we

treat our family and relatives. Unfortunately, this vital point is for the most part missing in today's society.

Marriage is the first step to starting a family and its significance has been repeatedly stressed by the Holy Qur'an and the example of the Holy Prophet. The Holy Qur'an enjoins the best relationship between a husband and wife and requires each to have due consideration for the needs and desires of the other. It also directs that they should behave affectionately towards each other. The Qur'an says: "*He it is Who created you from a single soul and made there from its mate, that he might find comfort in her*" (7:90). It further defines marriage with: "*Of His signs is that He created mates for you of your own kind that you may find peace of mind through them, and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that are signs for a people who reflect*" (30:22).

The Holy Prophet promoted good marital relations by his own example and said "*the best of you is he who treats his wife the best, and I am the best of you in this regard*" (Tirmidhi). The welfare of women was of great concern to him and he constantly advised his followers to treat their wives with kindness.

Islam views marriage as an equal partnership between two people, by which they please God through mutual cooperation, trust, respect and faithfulness. The Qur'an sums up their relationship with these words: "*They are a garment for you and you are a garment for them...*" (2:88). Thus, just like clothing, a husband and wife should protect each other, cover up each others faults and beautify each other, instead of criticizing every little weakness.

To promote further harmony in the partnership, Allah defines the role of each partner and assigns responsibilities to each spouse concerning the other. The Holy Qur'an says that man is made "guardian" over woman, and assigns him the financial responsibility for her welfare. In return, his wife should be obedient, guard her husband's secrets and be his support. The husband is directed to be the breadwinner, while his wife has the primary responsibility for raising children and maintaining the home. These guidelines help to avoid conflict between spouses over money, children and

household duties, especially when both work outside the home.

Islam even provides guidance for mate selection. The Holy Prophet advised: "*some people marry for beauty, some for rank, some for wealth and some for piety; but you should marry a good and pious person.*" When two people who have the same beliefs and ideals get married, the marriage is more likely to succeed. Islam promotes modesty and chastity as important virtues and does not permit free and unrestrained mixing of the sexes. Therefore, marriages are usually arranged by parents with the full consent and involvement of the boy and girl, keeping the above injunction in mind. The Muslim practice of segregation of the sexes after the age of puberty keeps Muslim society free from many of the ills found in Western society, such as extramarital affairs, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and broken homes.

Islamic teachings also deal with the parent-child relationship in detail. This is probably the most complex of all human relationships and it can make or break a family. It is a relationship that goes full circle; when the children are young, it is the parents that are in charge, but when they grow old, the situation may reverse with children having to take charge. However, Islam expects children to maintain an attitude of love and affection, respect and kindness to their parents, even when they get to an old and difficult age, and to give them priority over all other things except God. The Holy Qur'an contains a very comprehensive verse on this topic, which firstly tells us: "*Thy Lord has commanded that ye worship none but Him, and that ye show kindness to parents.*" Then, when the behavior of one or both of the parents becomes extremely trying and sometimes offensive in old age, the verse continues: "*If one or both of them attain old age with thee, never say to them as much as ugh nor reproach them, but always address them with kindly speech* (17:24). Then it says: "*Lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness....*" In other words, we must never forget what we owe to them for bringing us into this world and taking care of us. Finally, we are told to pray for them: "*[A]nd say, 'My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me when I was a little child'.*" (17:25)

Muslim families very often exist as extended families with grandparents very involved with their children and grandchildren, to the benefit of all. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly admonishes Muslims to



The Qur'an also commands parents to treat their children with love and understanding and to raise them in such a way that they grow up with feelings of dignity and self-respect.

be good to their parents and is exceptional in its appreciation of the role of mother:

"And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents – his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years – and said, 'Give thanks to Me and thy parents. Unto Me is the final return'" (31:15).

This verse was reinforced by the founder of Islam, Muhammad^{sa} when he declared that "*Paradise lies under the feet of mothers.*" Although it is a small sentence, it elevates the status of mothers to an unprecedented height and speaks volumes about the importance of mothers. It gives mothers the vital responsibility of making their homes into a 'heaven on earth' by creating a loving, warm and nurturing atmosphere for all the family, while at the same time acknowledging and appreciating the complexity and value of this task by rewarding them with the ultimate prize of Paradise. Without question a mother's full time presence in the home and complete attention to children adds greatly to a family's well-being and stability. However, contrary to popular belief, Islam does not prevent a woman from pursuing a career outside the home as long as she gives priority to her family.

The Qur'an also commands parents to treat their children with love and understanding and to raise them in such a way that they grow up with feelings of dignity and self-respect. The future of society depends on the children of today,

so it is imperative that they are brought with good moral values.

The Holy Qur'an warns: "*slay not your children for fear of poverty – it is We who provide for you and for them...*" (6:152). Children are a gift from God and He provides for them, but it is up to parents to take care of their spiritual and moral upbringing.

The Qur'an identifies some of these values when it describes the advice given by Prophet Luqman^{as} to his son:

"O my dear son, observe Prayer and enjoin good and forbid evil and endure patiently whatever may befall thee. Surely, this is of those matters which require high resolve; And turn not thy cheek away from men in scorn, nor walk in the earth haughtily; Surely, Allah loves not the arrogant boaster; And walk thou at a moderate pace, and lower thy voice; verily, the most hateful of voices is the braying of the ass" (31:18-20).

The Holy Prophet said: "*Respect your children and cultivate in them the best of manners*" (Ibn Majah). He also advised: "*Do not curse a child for when you curse, angels add: 'Let it be like that,' and like that it becomes... Address a child politely and courteously, for a child is a great mimic. If you address it rudely, it will return the compliment in kind. Do not lie to a child nor be peevish or arrogant with it. It will certainly imitate you.*" Nowadays children are increasingly exposed to immorality,

violence and profanity through television, movies and the internet. The result is that they are imitating these behaviors instead of learning values such as good manners, humility and honesty, which does not bode well for the future of society.

While the Holy Qur'an offers practical guidance for each aspect of life and emphasizes that we are accountable for all our actions to Allah Almighty, it also provides us with prayers to facilitate each action and reach our goal of pleasing Him. One such prayer pertaining to family life is:

"Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous" (25:75).

If everyone followed the teachings of the Holy Qur'an concerning the treatment of family members, we would have a society based on equality, love and righteousness. The social, moral and spiritual principles prescribed by the Holy Qur'an ensure strong and lasting relationships between all family members and give consideration to the rights and privileges of others. The beautiful doctrines of Islam are not confined to Muslims alone, but are universal and are applicable to the present and future for all mankind. ♦

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The Orthography of the Holy Qur'an

The most significant of the many distinguishing attributes of the Holy Qur'an among religious scriptures is its availability in the same exact form, words and arrangement as it was sent down more than 1400 years ago to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

By Naeem Ahmad Rathore

An exclusive feature of the Holy Qur'an is that it is the first of all revealed scriptures preserved in the form of a codex, or a 'book between two covers' unlike rolled scrolls or other forms of collected texts. *Qur'an* is derived from the Arabic root *Qara'a* which denotes to read, to read a written thing, to recite, with or without a script, proclaim, transmit, convey (a message). The Qur'an is a verbal noun and means reading, recitation, also a book that is meant to be read, recited, rehearsed etc. *Al Qur'an* is applied only to the revelation vouchsafed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

The most significant of the many distinguishing attributes of the Holy Qur'an among religious scriptures is its availability in the same exact form, words and arrangement as it was sent down more than 1400 years ago to the Holy Prophet

Muhammad^{sa}. It was in the form of direct speech of Allah, and not an experience or inspiration verbalized by the Holy Prophet. This continued textual purity is in fact an enduring miracle that was claimed and was prophesied to be so by the Holy Qur'an itself:

"Verily, We our self have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian." (15:10)

Chapter and Verse

The Qur'anic nomenclature for a chapter is *Sura*, and for a single verse, *Aya* (pl. *ayaat*). There are 114 suras of the Holy Qur'an, the longest being *Al Baqarah*, chapter two, with 287 *ayaat*, and the shortest being *Al Kauthar*, chapter 108, with four *ayaat*. All chapters begin with *Bismillah hirrahman nirraheem* (In the Name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful) except *Tauba*, chapter nine [considered a continuation of

the preceding chapter]. The relative position of each sura in the Holy Qur'an is part of a divine arrangement. The Holy Qur'an was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} over a period of 23 years, starting with the first five verses of Sura *Al Alaq*, chapter 96, and ending with, according to some scholars, part of verse five of chapter five:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion."

Textual Safeguards

The first and continued method of safeguarding the textual integrity of the Holy Qur'an is in its being committed to memory; firstly in the person of the Prophet of Islam himself, and later on, to be learnt, committed to memory and rehearsed by the *Huffaz* (sing. *Hafiz*), those who make it one of the purposes of their lives to safeguard the Holy Qur'an. All the early companions of Prophet

Muhammad^{sa}, including Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{ra}, Umar^{ra}, Uthman^{ra}, Ali^{ra}, Az Zubbair^{ra}, Abdullah bin Masoud^{ra} and many others memorized and rehearsed the Holy Qur'an as it was coming down. These ranks swelled to many hundreds after the migration and establishing of the faith in Medina.

There is ample evidence showing that the Holy Prophet had several *Katibeen-wahy* or amanuensis [one who is employed to take dictation or to copy manuscript] for the revelation, starting from the earliest Meccan period. The incident of the conversion of the Second Khalifa, Hadhrat Umar^{ra}, during the Holy Prophet's sojourn in Mecca, gives credence to the fact that the writing of the revealed text was being done concurrently. It is related that Hadhrat Umar^{ra} visited the house of his sister, who along with her husband, Saeed bin Zaid^{ra}, had already accepted the faith. When he found them learning Sura *Ta Ha*, (chapter 20) of the Holy Qur'an from Khabab bin Arrat^{ra}, he became violently angry with her and her husband. When about to strike down his brother-in-law, his sister came between them and after seeing her bloodied face, he became remorseful. He then asked to hear what they had been reciting, but was told to wash himself before being read the sheets on which the revealed Qur'an had been written. Assuredly, these sheets were copies of a dictated-to portion of the Holy Qur'an. After hearing these brief verses, Umar^{ra}, who was prior to that moment a bitter enemy of the faith, broke down in tears and accepted Islam.

After the migration, more scribes were added to the Meccan contingent; the most prominent being Zaid bin Thabit^{ra}. The following Hadith illustrates this point.

"Al Baraa' relates, 'There was revealed "Not equal are those who sit" (4:96), so the Prophet said: "Call Zaid for me and let him bring the board, the ink pot and the scapula bone." Then he said: "Write: Not equal are those...".' (Bukhari VI 512, 116, 118)

From the very first *wahy* or sending down of revelation, the exact place of the revealed portion in the final arrangement of the Holy Qur'an was also revealed to the Holy Prophet. Hadhrat Uthman^{ra} is reported to have said that "during the later days the Holy Prophet used to, when something was revealed to him, call someone from among those who used to write for him and say: 'Place these ayaat in the sura

in which this and this is mentioned' and when (only) one aya was revealed to him, he said: 'Place this aya in the sura in which this and this is mentioned'."

There are several *ahadith* that indicate the systematic writing down of the Holy Qur'an during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. There are instructions relating to touching the book only in a state of ritual purity of *wudu*; not to take it on a journey lest it falls into the hands of the enemy (Malik and Muslim), also there are reported instances when the Holy Qur'an written on parchment sheets were given to visiting delegations of new Muslims.

Recording of the Holy Qur'an

There was no indigenous paper making in Arabia at that time and the Holy Qur'an was written on whatever was available, including bits of paper, parchment, stone tablets, scraps of leather, scapula or shoulder blade bones, palm riss, and sometimes cloth. The writing instrument was generally a scapula bone point, or shaped tree twig, and the ink was an emulsion of black soot and water. It has also been reported that the writing materials were kept in the house of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself.

At the end of the Holy Prophet's worldly life, several hundred Huffaz, including many of the earliest companions, who had learnt it directly from the Holy Prophet and who had listened to their recitations, correcting as required, had memorized the entire Qur'an. The written Qur'an or *Mus'haf* was available only in several separate pieces of different type of media. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{ra}, on becoming the First Khalifa, embarked upon the task of writing out one standard authenticated copy of the Holy Qur'an, and to assist, he selected Zaid bin Thabit^{ra}. During this long and arduous process, Zaid^{ra} would not include an aya unless he had two separate authentications from the oral tradition as well as two confirmations from the written-as-dictated text. For every single aya, there were multiple confirmations of authenticity in both forms noted above. In fact, there was just one aya, the last aya of Sura Tauba, which was very well known to all, and was also found in personal *Mus'haf* of several companions, but for which there

was only one written-as-dictated confirmation, found in the dictated copy of Hadhrat Abu Khuzaima^{ra}. Still, there was never any doubt as to its authenticity or that of any of the ayaat included in the Qur'an.

This complete *Mus'haf* was compiled with each sura written on separate sheets of paper, but there was no order to the suras. However, the internal order of the Holy Qur'an and the place of each sura in the whole as instructed by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} were well known to the Muslims. It was written in the *Heery* script, and is known as the *Umm* or the source. This *Mus'haf* remained with Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{ra}, and later with Hadhrat Umar^{ra} during the latter's Khilafat and was then deposited with Hafsa^{ra}, daughter of Hadhrat Umar^{ra}.

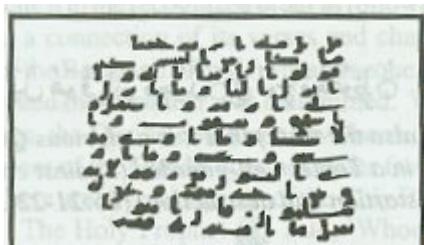
Mus'haf-i-Uthmani

During the Khilafat of Hadhrat Uthman^{ra} (644-656 CE), Islam spread far in the East and in the West with tremendous speed. Teachers of the Holy Qur'an with different accents and reading modes were all around, and their differing modes and accents were spreading all over. Several companions along with Hadhrat Uthman^{ra} himself were afraid that differences might occur that may affect the security and sanctity of the Holy Qur'an. Hadhrat Uthman^{ra} felt the need for a uniform reading mode of the Holy Qur'an so that any possibility of differences would be eliminated. He, therefore, asked Zaid bin Thabit^{ra} to head a committee of three others, all of whom were early companions belonging to the Tribe of Quraish, to make perfect copies of the authenticated copy. Later on, other companions also helped, the total reaching 12. These copies had the added facility of each sura being under its own heading. Also, all suras were arranged in their proper order as divinely instructed. These *Masahif* were sent to various places in the Muslim world, with one copy kept in Medina. The original remained with Hadhrat Hafsa^{ra}.

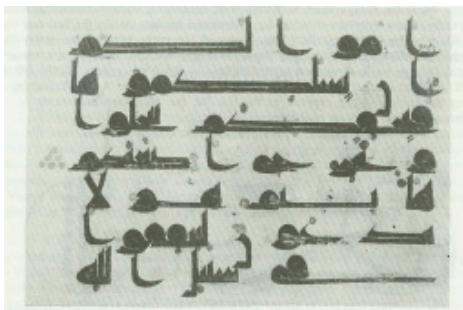
The Early Script

The script of all *Masahif* mentioned above were comprised only of consonants. There were no vowel points, or diacritical marks, and no *Nugatt* or points denoting different pronunciation of similar looking

consonants, like *ba* (ب), *ta*,* *tha* + *ya* (ي) looked alike, as did *jeem*, *ha* - and *kha* .. The script was rudimentary in the extreme and was basically straight lines of varying lengths, drawn horizontally and vertically. A rendering of the much-publicized image of the *Mus'haf-I-Uthmani*, which is reported to be in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is reproduced here:



The next great development in the writing of the Holy Qur'an was the *Tashkeel* or the addition of vowel marks. Most authorities agree that this work was started by Abu al-Aswad al-Doaly, a *Tabiee* during the Khilafat of the Fourth Rightly Guided Khalifa, Hadhrat Ali^{ra}, and it was completed during the reign of Hadhrat Mauwiya bin Abu Sufyan^{ra} (657-680 CE). The original vowels were in the form of dots denoting syntactical marks: The *fatha* (ء) was denoted by a dot above the letter, the *kasra* (ء) by

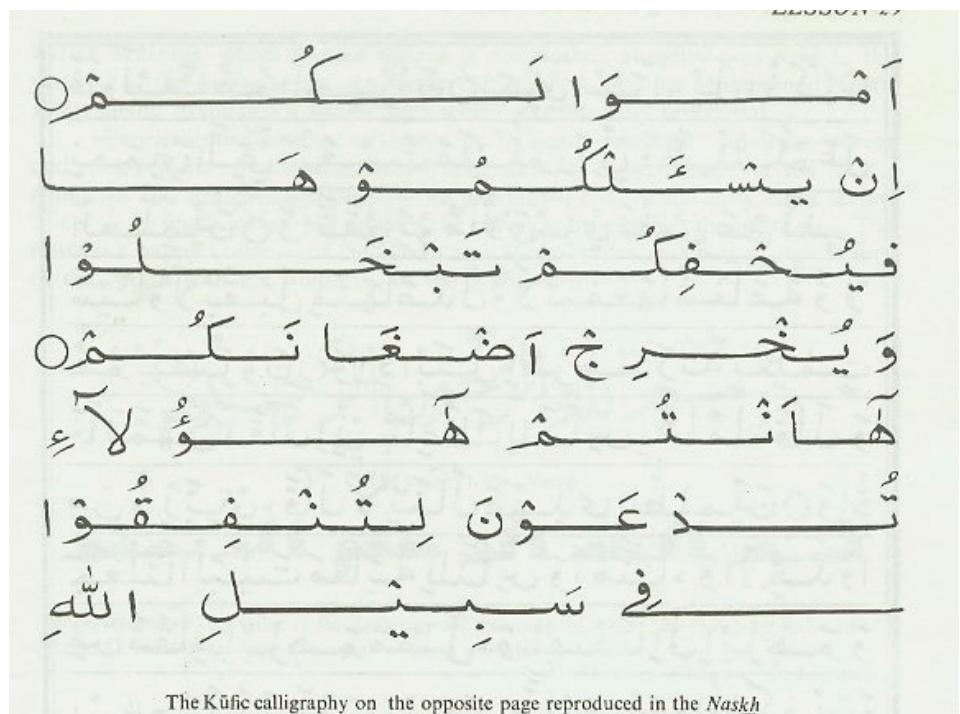


Qur'an leaf in Kufic, ninth century Egypt. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Rudolph M. Bieckel, 1950 (30.45). A portion of the last verses of the 47th Chapter of the Qur'an: 'anwalikum, iyya-nal-kawnihihi-kum ibdighal wa yashkuri idhikum. Hija 'aytum hila 'ulal' idhikum illi qid qid fi sabili-lah'.

a dot below the letter and a *damma* (ء) by a dot in front of it.

The next step for the ease of reading was *Tanqeeet* or points denoting different consonants. This work was done by Nasr bin Asem and Hayy bin Ya'amor during the reign of Abd al-Malik bin Marwan (685-705 CE).

A complete system of diacritical marks was invented by Al Khalil bin Ahmad al-



The Kūfic calligraphy on the opposite page reproduced in the *Naskh*

Faraheedy (d. 786 CE). This system, with signs for *fatha* (ء), *kasra* (ء), and *damma* (ء), and marks denoting long vowels, etc, is what is in use to this day.

Here is a page from a modern printing of the Holy Qur'an by *Dar-ul-Ma'rafah* in Jordan that graphically depicts the development of Qur'anic orthography.



Divisions of the Text

The *Mus'haf* of Hadhrat Uthman^{ra}, while placing the suras in their proper place and order, did not mark any other divisions of the text. During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, there were seven divisions or *Manazil* for a complete reading to be concluded in seven days. Aus bin Hudhaifa^{ra} reports that several companions told him that they used to read the Holy Qur'an in seven manazil, the first comprised of the first three suras, the second of the next five suras, the third of the next seven suras, the fourth of the next nine suras, the fifth of the next 11 suras, the sixth of the next 13 suras and the seventh of the *mufassal* or from Sura *Qaf* to the end.

The present day division of the Holy Qur'an into 30 parts or *Juzz'* is not according to the context or underlying meaning of the text, but only for the reading convenience during the nights of Ramadan, and for the education of children. For the ease of reading a set portion regularly, further divisions of the *Juzz'* are made

in *Ruba'* or one quarter, *Nisf* or one half and *thulth* or three fourth of each part.

The division of suras into *Ruku'* or sections is, however, done according to the units of meaningful context. This division was completed under the auspices of al Hajjaj bin Yusuf, the governor of Iraq during the reign of Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan (685-705 CE). The *ruku'* is denoted as the letter 'ain 9 with three sets of numbers: The top figure represents the position of the *ruku'* in the sura. The middle figure is the count of *ayaat* in the *ruku'*, while the bottom figure is the position of the *ruku'* in the *juzz*'. Each sura contains at least one *ruku'*.

Two explanations have been reported for adopting the *ruku'*: First, that each section denotes a nominal reading of the Holy Qur'an during a *raka'* of *salat* (prayer). The other being that the *Ulema* (religious leadership) have marked out 540 *ruku* so that during Ramadan a reading of the Holy Qur'an may be completed by the 27th night, by reading 20 *ruku* daily.

Punctuation Markings

The most important markings in the text of the Holy Qur'an are the added signs for punctuation, or grammatical stops, continuations and pauses. For non Arabic-speaking people, these signs are imperative for a correct reading, as stopping, or continuing at any given point, without an understanding of the text may completely change the meaning. The *Masahif* printed in the Middle East and North Africa generally have much less grammatical reading signs than those printed in other parts of the Muslim world. A listing of the more common marks is as follows:

- 'O' or a small circle – An abbreviation of *waqfe tam* or complete stop denotes the end of an aya. It is always correct stop here. The only exception is that during *Hadr* or fast speed recitation, especially during *Taraweeh* prayers [offered nightly during Ramadhan], one may connect to the next aya.
- A small *mim E* – Denotes a *waqfe lazim* or compulsory stop. The meanings will drastically change if you continue.
- The word *la D'* – Requires continued reading as a stop may change the meaning.

- A small *jeem* , – Means *waqfe jaiz*, meaning it is permissible to stop here.
- A small *ta 7* – For *waqfe mutliq*, meaning one may stop here. The sign means that the sentence is complete however the argument is continuing.
- A small *za 2* or *sad 5* – Denote *waqfe mujawazz* and *waqfe murakhass* respectively. Each indicating a lesser degree of permissible stops, only to relieve shortness of breath or other emergency. After such a stop re-reading from an earlier stop is required.
- A small *Qaf B* – For *qeela ala al-waqf*, meaning it is said to stop here.
- The word *salay ID5* – Means it is better to keep reading to the next sentence.
- A small *sin* or the word *sakta 3C*G* – Denote a short, momentary pause without a break in breathing.
- The word *qiff AB* or *waqf ABH* – Denote a longer *sakta*.
- The abbreviation *maa E9* – Denotes two equally permissible readings, observing either the first or the second stops.
- There are other markings for *Wafe ghufran*, where it is meritorious to stop, etc.
- The other significant marks are the signs for performing prostrations during recitations. There are 15 such places in the Holy Qur'an.

Reproduction of the *Mus'haf*

Over the centuries, the Holy Qur'an has been written by hand in many scripts, regional styles, on all kinds of media, in illuminated gold lettering and with elaborate trimmings. According to some, a part of the message of the Holy Qur'an is in the shape and connection of its letters that form words or *kalimat*. A whole new discipline of calligraphy was born out of the desire to present the word of God in the best possible manner. Indeed, the writing of the Holy Qur'an by hand is considered a great virtue and the earnings or *hadiyah* from the sale or exchange of a *Mus'haf* was among the most pure and desirable recompense for one's livelihood.

A large number of these manuscripts are available for view in museums of nearly every large city of the world. A simple search on the Internet will find innumerable links to websites that display great calligraphic masterpieces for visual pleasure and research.

The first printing of the Holy Qur'an using movable type was completed in Hamburg in 1694. Later it was also printed in Russia (1828) Persia (1833) and Istanbul (1877). Until very recently, Qur'anic printing was done by offset printing of hand written texts. A large number of Arabic fonts have been developed and these days all printing is done using these fonts.

The modern *Masahif* are printed for the ease of the reader for a correct recitation in mind. There are extended marks denoting the elongated vowels with the degree of elongation. The letter *alif* ' is given special marks in all its different sound patterns. It usually has a *hamza* ! if it is to be sounded, a small rectangle or an 'x' if it is not to be vocalized.

Many *Masahif* printed in Arab-speaking countries are color-coded for helping in *Tajweed* or the art of correct recitation. These include the length of the vowels, the nasalization of *tanween*, the assimilated consonants, the emphatic pronunciation of certain other consonants, and the unpronounced contracted and inverted letters. An introductory page from a *Mus'haf* printed in this style by *Dar-ul-Ma'rafah* in Jordan is reproduced on the next page.

Conclusion

All praise is due to Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, that His promise has been fulfilled and His Last Word, His Qur'an is as available to us as it was to the companions of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

It is only by His Grace that, as the circle of faith grew and more people became Muslims who were not versed in Arabic, the method of the writing the Holy Script evolved to facilitate its reading in the original, so that the living context will always be within reach. ♦

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سورة لقمان

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْمَ ١١١ تَلَكَ آيَتُ الْكِتَبِ الْحَكِيمِ ٢ هُدٰى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ ٣ الَّذِينَ يَقِيمُونَ الْأَصْلَةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ قَوْمٌ يُوقَنُونَ ٤ أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدٰىٰ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ٥ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُشَرِّى لَهُوَ الْحَدِيثُ لِيُضْلِلَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَ هَاهِرِواً ٦ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ٧ وَإِذَا نَتَّلَى عَلَيْهِ آيَتِنَا وَلَيْ مُسْتَكِنٍ كَانَ لَمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَانَ فِي أَذْنِيهِ وَقُرْآنٌ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ٨ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّتُ أَلْعَمٍ ٩ خَلَدِينَ فِيهَا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ١٠ خَلَقَ الْأَسْمَوْاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرْوِيْهَا ١١ وَأَنْزَلَنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَابْتَدَنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٌ ١٢ هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ فَأَرُوْفٌ مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ١٣ بَلِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

إدغام
لا يلفظوقف
اختباري

إدغام بفتحة

غنة
حكم الإلقاء

قلقلة

غنة
مع الشدةتفخيم
الراءإقلاب
التون إلى
فتحة

إدغام بفتحة

مد لازم
٦ حركاتمد واجب
٥ حركاتمد
عازف للمسكون
٦-٤ حركات
جوازاًمد
حركتانإدغام
لا يلفظمد لازم
٦ حركاتمد
عازف للمسكون
٦-٤ حركات
جوازاًمد
حركتان

Many Masahif printed in Arab-speaking countries are color-coded for helping in Tajweed or the art of correct recitation. These include the length of the vowels, the nasalization of tanween, the assimilated consonants, the emphatic pronunciation of certain other consonants, and the unpronounced contracted and inverted letters.

Book of Mankind

By Micah Tair

From the very tip of a pen there dripped unto a blank page an entire universe

Which blotted ink of dark matter and light

Staining all that was to be written with Power and Grace.

For every trillionth part of ink, wee oceans – galaxies.

And upon just one of its seas,

Upon just one of its waves, there floated a speck of dust.

And upon the insignificant particle of dust

There was Mankind – minute.

And within Mankind there was a heart.

And upon the heart there came

Flames roaring down from above.

Roaring from the celestial Pleiades.

Soaring between dimensions

With purpose they fell upon the microbial heart of Mankind like comets

Showering the medium in meteoric metaphor,

Thundering upon the surface of Mankind – Our Beloved Mankind.

And the thundering echoed deep into the heart and fathoms down

Through thousands of corridors

To where the spirit of Mankind sat listening from its spacious room.

From off in a distance it felt and heard the faint booms

Of destiny looming above and growing louder.

Responding in kind restless spirit paced and palpitated

Inside a cell whose membrane was loosing density.

Furthermore, spirit was entranced by age-old fire

Gabriel kindled inside protected womb – burning since the birth of man.

Gazing into that furnace,

Mankind began raging a fierce love.

As the Earth's core pushes up magma through its mantel,

So did spirit of Mankind push up.

Up, up and away from the dust into clay formations.

Called upward by the thundering instinctively it rose.

And from above, the Greater Love began to trickle through the cracks

And seep like lava down to the moment

When the two blazes met and consumed each other.
Thirst quenching flames.
Flames for the yearning.

Third degree burning with a white glow of a new fire.
A new fire summited Mankind on a mountaintop – well lit.
And plummeted the heart into a Gracious and Glorious abyss.
Inside a cave – well lit – a small clot formed.
And with recitation upon the lips

All of Mankind felt the entire weight of the ink pen dip
And drip across the heavens to illustrate the illustrious Book.
Took the life of all Mankind to perfect.

Mighty Star with wings spreading into both worlds
Transcribed for the most humble of hearts
A text to raise and destroy nations.
A text to perfect to next level our stations –
To journey through the middle path of our creation.
The book's binding is Unity,
(A hard or soft cover depending on the reader.)

Sprinkled with the aroma of omnipotent sage, each page is heaven scented.
As those pages turn, fanning the flames of age-old fires,
Within the sphere of the insignificant particle,
Rebirths go round to birds who are highly flammable.
Those truly possessing the Phoenix's constitution.
We submit at sunrise

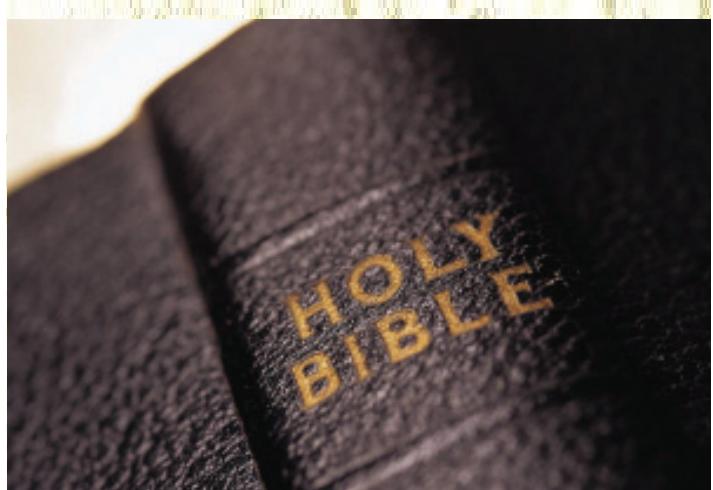
The Opening Rose blooms first for all unerringly led to the garden.
We submit at sunrise
That when Mankind ends, we begin again –
Reading and reciting that which is most inviting to angels.
Reading and reciting – highlighting with the tips of our pens –
What we knew not.

Micah Tair has a BA in Liberal Arts and is currently working on a nonfiction book dealing with Islamic dietary traditions. He resides in Oak Park, Illinois.



Muhammad in the Bible

By the late Imam, J.D. Shams
Part II



“For had you believed in Moses ye would have believed in me, for he wrote of me; but if ye believe not in his writings how will ye believe in my words?”

(John 5:46-47)

Transcription of an address given in a series of lectures in London by the late Imam JD Shams. Part I presented in The Muslim Sunrise, Summer 2006 issue.

The Battle of Badr

After David^{as}, in 714 B.C., Isaiah^{as} predicted concerning Arabia in these words:

“In the forest of Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye traveling companies of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him they fled. For they fled from the Swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail.” (Isaiah 21, 13-16)

Kedar, a son of Ishmael^{as} (Gen 25:13), refers here to the Quraish, one of the most powerful of the Arab tribes, whose leaders were killed in the Battle of Badr in which 313 Muslims, a great number of whom were refugees who had fled from Mecca from the drawn sword and the grievousness of war, fought 1,000 of the Quraish and achieved victory over them.

Among these 1,000, were the leaders and important personalities of the Quraish, most of whom were killed in this battle. The Holy Prophet of Islam, as recorded in Bokhari, after hearing their names, said:

“Mecca is offering us her liver; i.e., the best of her sons.”

This battle took place exactly one year after the flight from Mecca, to which the prophecy also points. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah^{as} the prophet:

“Within a year according to the years of a hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail.”

Concerning this prophecy, we read in the Qur'an:

“And they (the unbelievers) say, ‘Will this promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful? Say, you have the appointment for a day from which you cannot hold back any while, nor can you bring it on.’ (Ch. 34: 30-31)

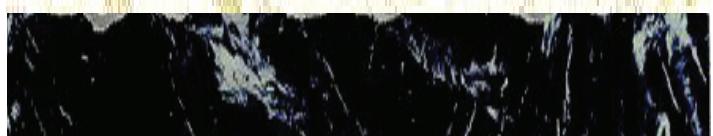
In prophetic language often a day stands for a year. See Clark's commentary on Daniel 12:11.

We read further in the Qur'an: “Maybe part of that which you hasten on, (i.e. punishment) will come to you after I am gone.” i.e. “After my flight”. Thus we see that Isaiah's prophecy coincides precisely with that of the Holy Qur'an, it was fulfilled a year after the flight of the Holy Prophet from Mecca.

A Spiritual Change in Arabia

Isaiah^{as} gives further information about the spiritual changes which took place in Arabia. He says:

“Sing unto Lord a new song, and his praise unto the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities



thereof (i.e. the cities of the desert) lift up their voices, the villages that Kedar inhabit" (i.e., Arabia), "Let the inhabitants of the rock sing (i.e., inhabitants of the secure cities) let them shout from the top of the mountains, let them give glory unto the Lord and declare his praise in the islands. The Lord shall go forth as mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war, he shall cry, yea, he shall roar, he shall prevail against enemies. I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, I will let them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light, before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. They shall be turned back, and they shall be greatly ashamed that truth in graven images, that say to the molten images, 'You are our God'." (Isaiah 42:10-17)

In these verses we have a remarkable description of the Arabs who worshipped graven images as their God, of how spiritually blind they were, how they stumbled in the darkness; but who, after the coming of the new song, i.e., the Qur'an, were guided to the right path; the darkness turned into light, and crooked things were made straight. In short the whole peninsula, villages, mountains and wilderness, echoed with the believers' cries in praise of God. The call from the lofty minarets was heard throughout the East: God is the greatest; Allah alone is worthy to be worshipped, and Muhammad^{sa} is His Messenger."

In the Hajj (pilgrimage), peoples of various countries flocked every year to where the Kedar lived, and they shouted from the top of the mountains of Mecca the Adhan (call to prayer) and Talbiyya (i.e., "We are ready, O our Lord, there is no associate with Thee, and all praise and grace belong to Thee.").

More about the Prophet

Leaving the prophecies of some other prophets who followed Isaiah^{as}, I come to 626 B.C. in which Habakkuk disclosed some new points and particulars about the Holy prophet of Islam, three of which I like to mention here:

1. "God came from Teman and the Holy one from Mount Paran. His glory covered the Heavens and the earth was full of his praise." (3:3)

I have already mentioned that Paran is the place where Ishmael^{as} and his descendants lived, and the name is used for Arabia. In verse 3:7 Habakkuk says:

"I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction."

The commentators of the Bible write that Cushan is Arabia. The Arabians dwelt in tents, so they were called "Semites". Therefore, this prophecy is obviously concerned with Arabia, of which the heavens and all the land were filled with the praise of God, and His glory, in consequence of the appearance of the Holy Prophet of Islam upon whom too, according to the Qur'an, God and his angels in Heaven gave their blessings; and the believers on earth perpetually called the divine blessings on him.

Wollaston writes:

"The mission of Islam was inexorable. Jew, Pagan and Christian were alike set aside; the religion of the future was to be the worship of one God."

"There is no god but God, and Muhammad^{sa} is His Prophet" had become a factor in the world history. The key of paradise was,

to use the prophet's own striking words, "to testify that there is no god but the Lord alone, with Him there is no partner." (1/2 hour with Mohammed, p.65)

2. "Before him went the pestilence and burning coals went forth at his feet."

In the Arabic translation, instead of 'Burning coals' we have 'the fever.' Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, writes in his commentary:

"The authorized version has unfortunately rendered all the verbs in this section in the past tense, thus obscuring the sense of the poem. They all refer to a scene really future, but brought by the grasp of Faith, into the immediate present."

He says, about this phrase:

"Better, before him shall go the plague and burning pestilence shall go forth where he sets his feet."

This happened exactly as foretold. When the Holy Prophet came to Medina, which was weltering under its pestilence and many of his fellow refugee were prostrate with the fever. Sir William Muir writes:

"On which Mohammed^{sa}, looking upwards, prayed, O Lord! Make Medina dear unto us, even as Mecca, or even dearer. Bless its produce and banish far from it the pestilence."

In the margin, he adds:

"So prevalent was the fever, that at one time Mahomet^{sa} was almost the only person at prayers able to stand up." (Life of Mahomet p. 65)

This pestilence was removed from Medina, the burning fever fled away by the prayers of the Holy Prophet, as is also mentioned in Bukhari in the chapter, Interpretation of Dreams. Abdullah^{ra}, son of Omar^{ra}, relates that the Holy Prophet of Islam whilst in Medina saw in a vision that a jet black woman with disordered hair went out in Medina and stood in Jahfa, and he interpreted it to mean that the pestilence of Medina had been removed to Jahfa. Thus the prediction of Habakkuk was verbally fulfilled in the time of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

3. *"Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Thou didst strike through with his stave the head of the villages."* (3:13-14)

Ellicott says later:

"Thou dost pierce with his (thine anointed people's) spears the head of his (the enemy's princes) when they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me, their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly." (3:13-14)

Christian commentators who try to apply this prophecy to Jesus Christ^{as} are disturbed over these two points. They cannot find any satisfactory answers; instead treat them very obscure clauses. But we find a literal fulfillment of these points in the Holy Prophet.

The last point is the uttermost efforts made by the chieftains of Mecca who went to the Battle of Badr like a whirlwind with the intention of extirpating Islam. The prayer of the Holy Prophet at this time reflects the true picture of the danger.

Wollaston writes:

"Mohamed^{sa} was fully alive to the importance of the struggle upon which he had entered-immediately before the battle, he implored the assistance of the God whose cause he was supporting: O' Lord! I beseech Thee; forget not Thy promise of assistance and of victory. O Lord, if this little band be vanquished, idolatry will prevail and the pure worship of Thee ceases from off the Earth." (1/2 Hour with Mohamed, p. 51)

Now the first clause that "thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked by discovering the foundation unto the neck" is very interesting. The various authors in their commentaries on the Bible write:

"The obscurity of this verse is diminished if we remember that Pharaoh is being spoken of as (to use our own common phrase) 'the head of his house.' This head, says the prophet, Jehovah struck entirely away at the disaster of the Red Sea."

I have already quoted above from the Lord Bishop Ellicott's commentary, 'that all the verbs in this section refer to a future scene.' Therefore it is futile to say that the verse refers to Pharaoh's destruction in the Red Sea. This prophecy had its true fulfillment when Abu Jahl, the head of the Quraish, received a blow of the scimitar in the thigh which brought him to the ground; his head was later cut off by Abdullah son of Masood. Dermangham tells us how.

"Abdullah ben Masood found Abu Jahl in a dying state. He put his foot on his chest already to deal with him the death blow, but the old man asked: 'To whom is the victory?' 'To God and His Prophet.' The dying man lifted himself up painfully, and with a terrible look, a mingling of sadness, rage and pride, he grasped Abdullah's beard and said: 'Little herdsman that you are! You are about to kill me. But you aspire a trifle too high. I am the noblest man that it shall be given you to put to death. And I have already been vanquished by a mere peasant.' Abdullah cut off his head and brought it to the Prophet. 'There is no God but Allah,' said he prostrating himself, 'This man was the Pharaoh of our nation and he has been punished'." (P.189)

In another tradition quoted in Al-Siratul Halabiyya, Abdullah Ibn Masood said: "When I struck him with my saber, it did not strike well. Then Abu Jahl spat in my face and said: 'Take thou my sword and cut off my head from the foundations of my neck!' And I did so." Edward William Lane, after mentioning the meaning of *Arsh* (i.e., a vein in the base of the neck), writes: "...and when it is said *Arsh Falan*, it means he struck him in the base of the neck."

It is related in a tradition respecting the slaying of Abu-Jahl, that he said to Ibn Masood: "Take thou my sword and cut with it my head from my *Arsh* (vein in the base of the neck)." (Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon)

In this prophecy, Abu Jahl is named the head of the wicked, as Pharaoh was by his own confession when he said, "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Exodus 9:27).

And as Pharaoh incited the people to pursue the Israelites when they fled from Egypt, likewise, "Abu Jahl was the person who mounted the roof and sounded the alarm" (Life of Mohamed by Irving. P. 109). In this way the prophecy is connected with Pharaoh, but not the Pharaoh of Moses^{as}, but the Pharaoh of the Prophet^{sa}, whom Moses^{as} described as one 'like unto him'.

A Prophet after Jesus

Now I come to the time of Jesus Christ^{as}. In his time, we find that all the Jews believed in the coming of three prophets: Elias^{as}, Messiah and That Prophet (John 1:21). Jesus^{as} was the Messiah and he regarded John the Baptist as Elias (Matt. 11:15). Then where is "that prophet" who was to come after the Messiah? The Rev. Sadler writes:

"That prophet seems to refer to the one foretold by God in Deut. 18:18. It seems that the Jews did not universally understand this prophecy of the Messiah." (The St. John's Gospel with Notes by Sadler)

We have already examined the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:18. We found that the prophet mentioned in it cannot be the Messiah. It is the Holy Prophet of Islam who was to come after the Messiah. Thus did Jesus^{as} point out in the parable of the Vineyard that after him "shall come the Lord of Vineyard, and he will destroy those wicked husbandmen, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." "Jesus^{as} said unto them: 'Did you never read in the scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner. This was from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore, I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces, but on whosoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder'." (Matt. 21:40-41)

Moreover, Peter's saying, recorded in Acts 3:22, leaves no room for doubt that after Jesus^{as} "shall come the prophet like of Moses^{as}, about whom all the prophets have prophesied". Therefore, undoubtedly, the Holy Prophet of Islam was the prophet foretold, who appeared after Jesus^{as}, from the descendants of Ishmael about whom it was said: "His hand shall be against every man, and every man's against him" (Gen 16:12). And who was rejected by the builders and cast out into the wilderness in the hope that he should not be heir with Isaac (Gen. 21:10); but at last in the person of the Holy Prophet of Islam was made the corner stone of the building of religion and civilization of the world. The wicked husbandmen who dwelt in the outskirts of Medina were miserably punished; the persecutors were deprived of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth.

The Spirit of Truth

Avoiding the dispute between Muslims and Christians about the word "Comforter" or "Paraclete," I take the verse (John 16:12-14) in which Jesus says: I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth is come he will guide you to all truth, for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you or declare things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show or declare it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore,

said I that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

This “Spirit of Truth” cannot be the Holy Ghost as Christian commentators claim.

Firstly, because the Holy Ghost was in the world in the time of Jesus. John the Baptist witnessed the spirit like a dove descending upon Jesus^{as}; he said that Jesus^{as} “Shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Mark 1:8-10). Luke tells us about a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, that the Holy Ghost was upon him, and had revealed to him that he would see Christ before his death (Luke 2:25). But the spirit of truth mentioned in the verse under discussion was to come after Jesus^{as}.

Secondly, the Holy Ghost did not reveal to the disciple new things which they should not bear in Jesus’s^{as} lifetime. On the contrary, they gave up the burden of the Law, and made many concessions to the people in the matter of religion, and dropped many restrictions on eating and drinking.

Thirdly, The Holy Ghost did not reveal to them more of the truth than Jesus^{as} did.

Fourthly, the disciples spoke themselves and never claimed that God spoke to them.

Fifthly, the disciples did not make prophecies by revelation of God about the future.

The true fulfillment of this prophecy was the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Firstly, he came after Jesus^{as} and brought a perfect comprehensive Law containing the new ordinances and commandments, which Jesus’s^{as} disciples were not able to bear—such as the ordinances of fighting, and five daily prayers, and a complete code of eating and drinking, and for all social affairs.

Secondly, he was given all the truth, (i.e., the Qur'an) about which God says: “In the Qur'an are all the right books” (98:3), meaning, the right teachings, ordinances, directions and all items necessary for the guidance of man, whether they were revealed before or not, are all to be found in the Qur'an.

Thirdly, he did not speak from himself, but what he received from Allah. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

“Nor speaks he of his own inclination. It is but a revelation which is revealed to him.” (53:34)

“And whenever our clear communications are recited to them, those who do not hope of our meeting say: ‘Bring Qur'an other than this, or change it.’ Say, ‘It does not be seem me to that I should change it of myself; I follow naught but what is revealed to me.’” (10:15)

Fourthly, he glorified Jesus^{as} by revealing Jesus’s^{as} true position to the world; exonerated him and his mother from the stigmas placed on them in the past. He cleared him of being ‘cursed of God’, as the Jews and Christians believed alike, on the ground that he died on the cross. The Qur'an refuses this idea based on surmise and declares that the Jews “did not kill him assuredly, but on the contrary he died his natural death, and God exalted him in his presence. (4:158)

Fifthly, he forecast by the revelation of God about the future so abundantly, that it is useless to attempt to find his parallel among the other prophets. There are, for instance, prophecies in the Qur'an and traditions in respect of our own time. These have been fulfilled precisely. If God please, I will give an account of them on some other occasion.

In short, the true object of this prophecy is none other than the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Prophecies applied to Jesus

Before I conclude my subject, I would like to mention three prophecies applied to Jesus^{as} from Matthew's Gospel:

1. Matthew says:

“Joseph (with Mary and Jesus) lived in Egypt until the Death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophets, saying: ‘Out of Egypt have I called my Son’.”

The real words of the prophet in the Old Testament are: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” (Hosea 11:1)

Now it is clear as sun from the original words of the prophets that they refer to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, about whom God said, “Israel is my son, even my first-born” (Exodus 4:22).

2. When Herod slew all the children of Bethlehem, from two years old and under, then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah^{as} the prophet, saying: “In Rama was there a voice heard lamenting and weeping, and great mourning: Rachel weeping for children, and would not be comforted, because they are not” (Matt. 2:17-19). But in the Old Testament Jeremiah^{as} continues: “Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again from the land of the enemy, and there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their border” (Jeremiah 31:16-17).

These are the words. Evidently the prophet speaks these words to the children of Israel as they are carried away into captivity into Babylon. The prophet forecasts that they will be released and will come back to their own homes.

3. Joseph^{as} came back with Jesus^{as} and Mary^{ra} from Egypt and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets; he shall be called Nazarene (Matt. 2:23). But these words are not to be found in any prophet's books.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to say that these prophecies about the coming of the Holy Prophet of Islam, clearer than those about Prophet Jesus^{as}, were one of the many reasons which led unprejudiced Christians to accept Islam. They knew that the rejection of a prophet who appears in accordance with prophecies is, as Jesus^{as} said, the rejection of the prophets who prophesied about him. After learning the truth of the Holy Prophet of Islam, they feared not the opposition of their relatives and countrymen and boldly became Muslims declaring: There is none worthy of worship besides Allah, and Muhammad^{as} is His Messenger.

They were convinced of Islam through a sword. Not a sword of steel, though, but the unbreakable sword of reason and argument. By the same sword, Christians of this age will accept Islam, and the One, True God will be worshipped in all the world. Amen! ◆

"The straight path and the principal means which is full of the lights of certainty, and is the perfect guide for our spiritual welfare and our intellectual progress, is the Holy Qur'an which is charged with the settlement of all the religious contests of the world. It contains a large quantity of the water of life for us and comprises many rare and priceless jewels which are hidden in it and are being displayed every day. It is an excellent touchstone whereby we can distinguish between truth and falsehood. It is the one bright lamp which shows the way of truth."

- Promised Messiah Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}
Ruhani Khazain, London, 1984, Vol. 3, pp. 524-525



Signs of Allah in the Holy Qur'an

Part I

By Imam Mubasher Ahmad

What is a Sign of Allah?

A "Sign" is a practical operation or a verbal expression of God's will intended to lead men to a Divine purpose, to establish a relationship between God and His people. In the Holy Qur'an, a "Sign" (Ayah; pl. Ayaat) has several connotations. Most commonly, an Ayah is understood to be a communication from God. All the verses (complete lines) of the Qur'an are called "Signs" (Ayaat) because every one of them constitutes a sign of guidance and wisdom for mankind to stay close to God: *And thus do We make clear the Signs, that they may be admonished and that they may return to Us* (Qur'an 7:175).

A "Sign" of God, in the real sense of the word, means a wonder and miracle, a spectacular event that appears from God to lead men to know Him. For example, Prophet Moses^{as} performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the wilderness. A logical and convincing argument is also known as a "Sign" (Ayah). In addition, the Qur'an uses the term "Signs" for all natural phenomena. A careful study of natural things and their functions tends to give strong indication that there is a creator and sustainer of all that exists Who is All-Wise and Benevolent. Sometimes, a prophet/messenger of God also shows a Sign as a warning. Such a Sign becomes a pending judgment on disbelief. The Qur'an declares: *And We send no Signs but to warn* (17:60). God also shows His Signs against His enemies, the sinners, as punishment for their rejection of truth. For instance, Prophet Noah's^{as} flood was one of such Signs (54:16). The greatest of all the Signs is to become one with God, to "see" Him by attaining the utmost nearness to Him. This Sign was bestowed in its full glory upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{s.a.}: *Surely, he saw the greatest of the Signs of his Lord* (53:19).

Signs and Symbolism:

Certain signs mentioned in the Qur'an are symbolic. For example, the quickening of the earth after its death is a symbolic sign for the revival of peoples who are morally and

The likeness of the present life is only as water which we send down from the clouds, then mingle with it the produce of the earth, of which men and cattle eat till, when the earth receives its ornateness and looks beautiful and its owners think they have power over it, there comes to it Our commandment by night or by day and We render it a field that is mown down, as if nothing had existed there the day before. Thus We expound the Signs for a people who reflect (10:25).



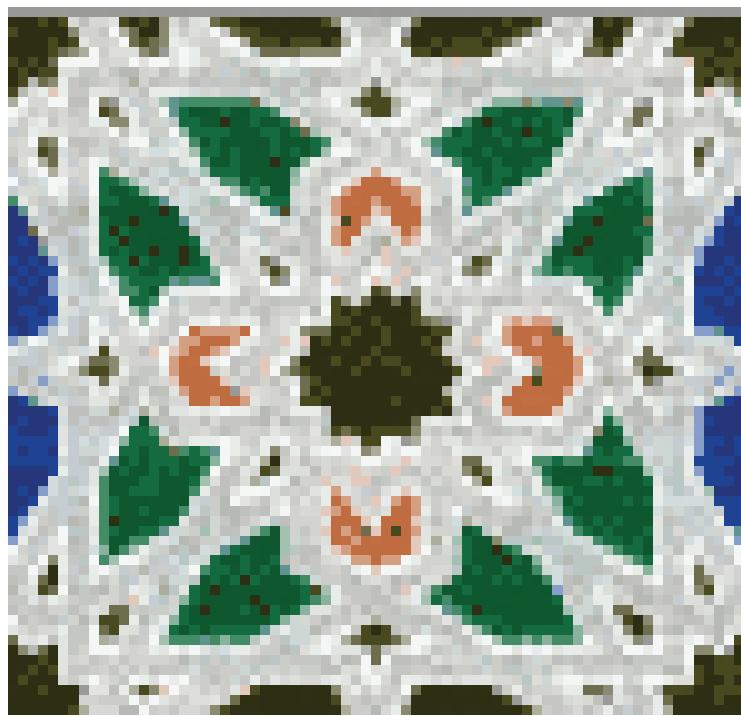
Has not the time arrived for those who believe that their hearts should be humbled at the remembrance of Allah and at the truth which has come down to them, and that they should not become like those who were given the Book before them, but their hearts were hardened, and many of them are wicked? Know that Allah is now quickening the earth after its death. We have made the Signs manifest to you, that you understand (57:18).

spiritually dead: **Has not the time arrived for those who believe that their hearts should be humbled at the remembrance of Allah and at the truth which has come down to them, and that they should not become like those who were given the Book before them, but their hearts were hardened, and many of them are wicked? Know that Allah is now quickening the earth after its death. We have made the Signs manifest to you, that you understand** (57:18).

The worldly life is temporary and illusionary; materialism is discouraged by the Qur'an: **The likeness of the present life is only as water which we send down from the clouds, then mingle with it the produce of the earth, of which men and cattle eat till, when the earth receives its ornativeness and looks beautiful and its owners think they have power over it, there comes to it Our commandment by night or by day and We render it a field that is mown down, as if nothing had existed there the day before. Thus We expound the Signs for a people who reflect** (10:25).

Variety of Signs:

The Holy Qur'an also mentions a variety of other significant signs in different connotations. For example: "The Station of Abraham" (3:97); the "Ark" or a "contented heart" given to Israelites (2:248); a person (Prophet Ezekiel^{as}) who saw in a vision that he slept for 100 years (2:260); the Sign of a "she-camel" that Prophet Saleh^{as} gave to his tribe Thamud (7:74); "Mary and her son Jesus" (23:51, 5:76); "the table of food" given to Jesus (5:114); "spoils of war" (48:21); "adornments of Allah" including "good and pure provisions" (7:33); **He it is Who shows you His Signs, and sends down provision for you from heaven; but**



Referring to Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, the Qur'an says: He is "a Messenger who recites unto you the clear Signs of Allah that he may bring those who believe and do good deeds out of every kind of darkness into light (65:12). He it is Who has raised among the unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves who recites unto them His Signs, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest misguidance (62:3, 3:165).

none pays heed save he who turns to Him (40:14); economical differences (39:53); "clothes" to cover human shame, and the raiment of righteousness being the best dress (7:27) – all these are called "Signs of Allah" in the Holy Qur'an.

Signs are shown through Prophets and Messengers of God:

God shows Signs in favor of prophets and their followers as a proof that they

are truthful and that He is on their side. Prophetic Signs have two revelatory elements: First, the announcement of a revealed prophecy for a future event and, second, the symbolism of that event. When a Sign takes place, overcoming all impediments, the authority of the prophet showing the Sign is attested that he is from God. **Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before you, but when he sought to attain what he aimed at, Satan put obstacles in the way what he sought after. But Allah removes the obstacles that are placed by Satan. Then Allah firmly establishes His signs. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise** (22:53).

Objective of the Signs:

The objective is to establish the truth, to provide guidance, salvation and righteousness to mankind through Gnosis of the Divine, the One God. We read in the Qur'an: **He is Who sends down clear Signs to His servant that He may bring you out of darkness into the light. And verily, Allah is Compassionate and Merciful to you** (57:10). Referring to Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, the Qur'an says: He is "a Messenger who recites unto you the clear Signs of Allah that he may bring those who believe and do good deeds out of every kind of darkness into light (65:12). He it is Who has raised among the unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves who recites unto them His Signs, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest misguidance (62:3, 3:165). These are the Signs of Allah, We rehearse them to you while they comprise the truth; and Allah wills not any wrong to His creatures (3:109).

The verses of the Qur'an are Signs of Allah:

These are Signs (ayaat — verses) of the clear Book (12:2, 26:3, 28:3). These are Signs of the Book that are full of wisdom (10:2). These are the Signs of the Book, and that which has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, but most men believe not (13:2). These are Signs of the Book and of the illuminating Qur'an (15:2, 27:2). And remember what is recited in your houses of the Signs of Allah and of wisdom. Verily Allah is the Knower of subtleties, All-Aware (33:35). And let them not turn you away from the Signs of Allah, after they have been sent down to you; and call mankind to your Lord, and be not of those who attribute partners to Him (28:88).

The chapters (Suras) of the Qur'an and the entire Qur'an are also referred to as comprising of manifest "Signs": *This is a Sura which We have revealed and which We have made obligatory; and we have revealed therein clear Signs, that you may take heed (24:2). Thus We have sent it (the Qur'an) down as manifest Signs. Surely Allah guides whom He wills (22:17). This is a Book which We have revealed to you, full of blessings, that they may reflect over its Signs, and that those gifted with understanding may take heed. (38:30); A Book, the Signs of which have been expounded in detail in eloquent language for a people who have knowledge (41:4, 41:45). And in like manner We sent down the Book to you, so those whom We have given true knowledge of the Book believe in it (the Qur'an), and there are some (of these Meccans) who believe in it, and none but the ungrateful deny our Signs. Nay, it is collection of clear Signs in the hearts of those who are given knowledge. And none but the wrong-doers deny Our Signs. And they say, "why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, The Signs are with Allah, and certainly I am a clear Warner (29:48, 50,51).*

Some of the Signs are open to interpretations:

"He it is Who has sent down to you the Book; in it are Signs that are decisive in

meaning? They are the basis of the Book. There are others that are susceptible of different interpretations. But those in whose hearts is perversity pursue such thereof as are susceptible of different interpretations, seeking discord and seeking wrong interpretation of it. And none knows its right interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. They say, 'We believe in it; the whole (of the Qur'an) is from our Lord.' And none heed except those gifted with understanding" (3:8).

All the Prophets and Messengers rehearsed the Signs, by the leave of God, to their contemporaries:

The Prophets and Messengers were made distinct from others by giving them Signs for the guidance of their people. *And never did your Lord destroy the townships, till He had raised up in their mother-town a Messenger reciting unto them Our Signs. And never did We destroy the townships unless the folks thereof were evil-doers (28:60). And, indeed, We sent Messengers before you (Muhammad), and We gave them wives and children. And it is not possible for a Messenger to bring a Sign save by the command of Allah. For every term there is a Divine decree (13:39). And We did send Messengers before you; of them are some whom We have mentioned to you, and of them there are some whom We have not mentioned to you; and it is not possible for any Messenger to bring a Sign except by the leave of Allah. But when Allah's decree came, the matter was decided with truth, and then there perished those who uttered falsehood (40:79). And He shows you His Signs; which one of the Signs of Allah will you deny? (40:82). 'O company of Jinn and men! Did not the Messengers come to you from among yourselves who related to you mine Signs and who warned you the meeting of this your day?' (6:131). Prophet Noah^{as} reminded his people of their duty through the Signs of Allah (10:72). Prophet Moses^{as} was given great Signs to perform: *And We did send Moses, with Our Signs and manifest authority (40:24).* Prophets after Moses continued to show Signs of Allah: *We brought forth generations (after Moses), and life became prolonged for them. And you were not a dweller in Median, reciting unto them Our Signs, but We kept sending Messengers to men (28:46).**

Ask the children of Israel how many clear Signs We gave them. But whoso changes the gift of Allah after it has come to him, surely, then, Allah is severe in punishing (2:212).

Bartering the Signs of Allah:

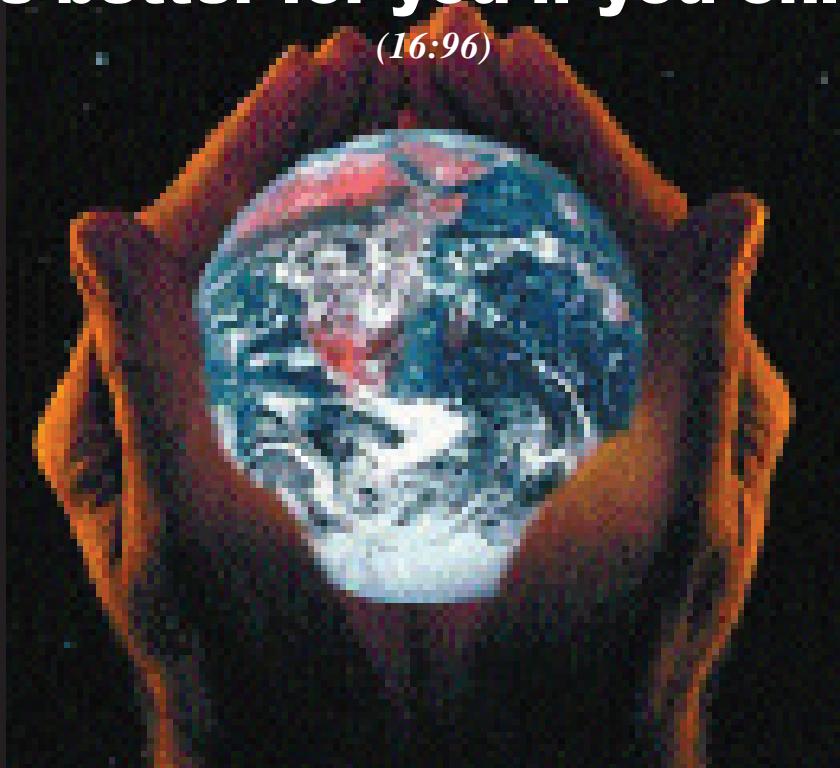
"Selling" or "bartering" the Signs of Allah is another significant phrase used in the Holy Qur'an: *O children of Israel! Remember My favor that I bestowed upon you, and fulfill your covenant with Me, I will fulfill My covenant with you, and Me alone should you fear. And believe in what I have sent down which fulfills that which is with you, and be not the first to disbelieve therein, and barter not My Signs for a paltry price, and take protection in Me alone (2:41, 5:45).* Bartering of God's Signs with something lesser in value means to discard the covenant made with God and, instead, give precedence to worldly life and material objectives that have no real value. *And barter not the covenant of Allah for a paltry price. Surely, that which is with Allah is better for you if you only knew (16:96).* The Qur'an has very strong words for those who indulge in such a losing business: *Those who conceal that which Allah has sent down of the Book (that is, the Signs) and take in exchange for that a paltry price, they fill their bellies with nothing but fire. Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And for them is a grievous punishment. It is they who have taken error in exchange of guidance and punishment for forgiveness. How great is their endurance of Fire. That is because Allah has sent down the Book with the truth; and surely, they who disagree concerning the Book are gone far in enmity (2:175-177).*

Abrogation of some of the Signs:

Based on certain statements in the Holy Qur'an, the issue of "abrogation" of some revealed verses is discussed by scholars and commentators of the Qur'an. *Whatever Sign We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof (2:107).* Misunderstanding the meaning of this verse, erroneous opinion was formed as if some of the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to cancel out some

And barter not the covenant of Allah for a paltry price. Surely, that which is with Allah is better for you if you only knew

(16:96)



other verses of the Qur'an. But the upholders of this opinion could not agree among themselves how many verses of the Qur'an are "abrogated." Some commentators claimed that up to five hundred verses were abrogated, but then there were others who thought that only five verses of the Qur'an were abrogated. Furthermore, it was not clear whether the abrogated verses were still kept as an integral part of the text of the Qur'an or they were completely deleted from the text. If these verses were not taken out of the Qur'an, then what was the need to keep them in the text? A careful study of the Qur'an, however, makes it clear that the "replacement" or "abrogation" of the Signs is not in reference to the revealed verses of the Qur'an itself. The reference is to the revealed messages given to previous Prophets of God.

Some previous revelations had become either antiquated or forgotten. The new communications sent down to Prophet Muhammad^{sa} replaced them. The Qur'an superseded the instructions given through some of the past Prophets. Taking the word "Ayah" in the sense of a legal code, the "abrogation of Signs" would mean that in certain matters, the Law of Islam is different from some of the previously revealed religious instructions. Obviously, in such a case the followers of the previous scriptures would not like this change, and they would erroneously regard it as an evidence of the Qur'an being a forgery. *And when we bring one Sign (Ayah) in place of another – and Allah knows best what He reveals? They say, 'You are but a fabricator.' Nay, most of them know not* (16:102). The previous

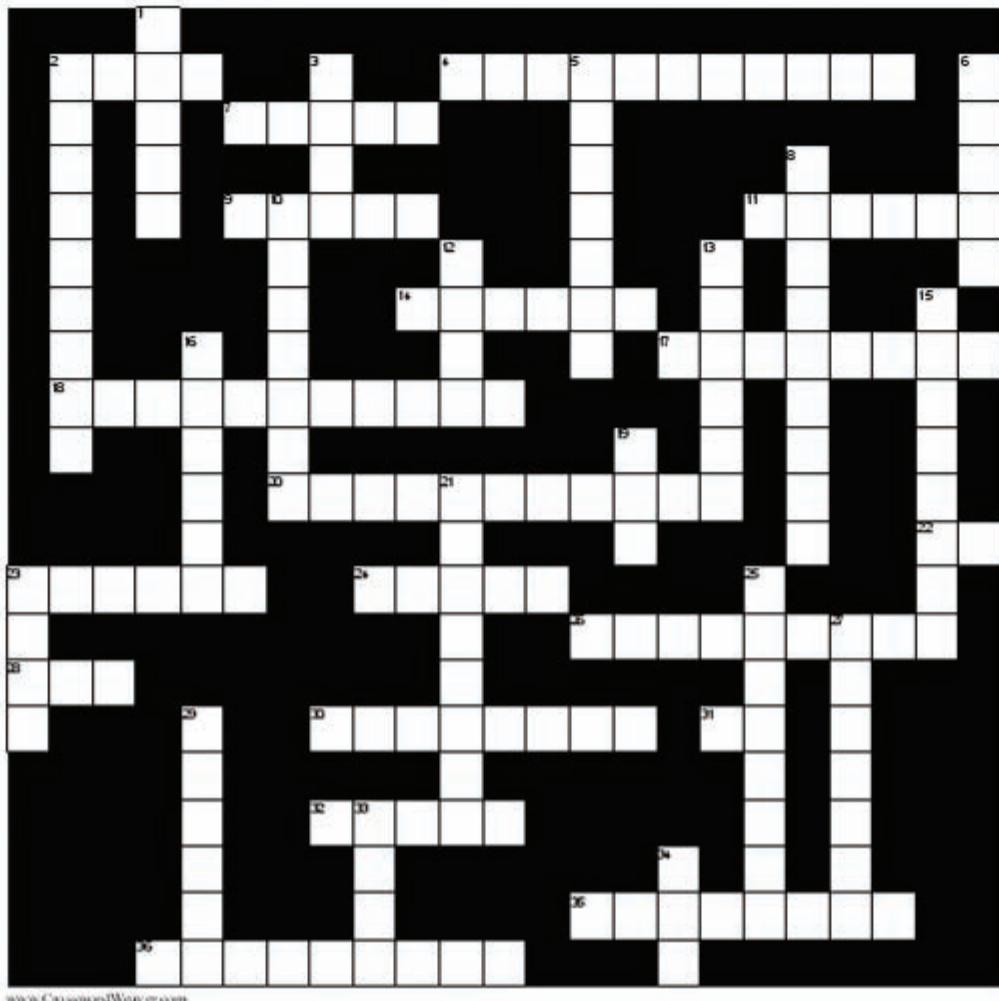
Scriptures were meant for specific people and for a limited time. The verses of the Qur'an gave comprehensive and global instructions to mankind for all times to come. *This is a Book whose verses have been made unchangeable and then they have been expounded in detail. It is from One Wise, and All-Aware* (11:2).

Abrogation of some of the Signs may also mean that if the disbelievers express their repentance during a course of given time, a "warning of punishment" promised to the rejecters of the truth is averted or replaced by a Sign of mercy and forgiveness from God.♦

Part 2
Winter issue of the
Muslim Sunrise.

Trivial Matters

Many answers can be found in this issue



ACROSS

2 Ahl al-Kitab, People of the ___
4 NY Times bestseller by Perkins
7 Closest animal to a human
9 US Senator Barack ___
11 ___ of Jesus
14 Written Qur'an (See Orthography)
17 Pre-dawn, supererogatory prayers
18 Nobel prize winning ___ theory by Dr. Salam
20 Universal Declaration of ___
22 The Capital
23 Astronomer, rhymes with bubble
24 Islam's sacred scripture
26 Garden State
28 Quranic Verse
30 Driver anger (2 wd's)
31 Global assoc. of govts
32 Lewis What went ___
35 Ever-expanding ___
36 Free online encyclopedia

DOWN

- 1 Scripture of Moses
- 2 Richest person in the world
- 3 World Cup
- 5 First chapter
- 6 Direction of prayers for Muslims
- 8 2nd US President
- 10 Longest chapter
- 12 Quranic chapter
- 13 Book revealed to David
- 15 September holiday
- 16 Back to ____
- 19 Doctor's Degree
- 21 First successor of Promised Messiah
- 23 Miami hoops squad
- 25 New Fed chief
- 27 Abraham's scripture
- 29 Island state
- 33 Sec. of State
- 34 16-year-old golf pro

Sudoku Puzzle

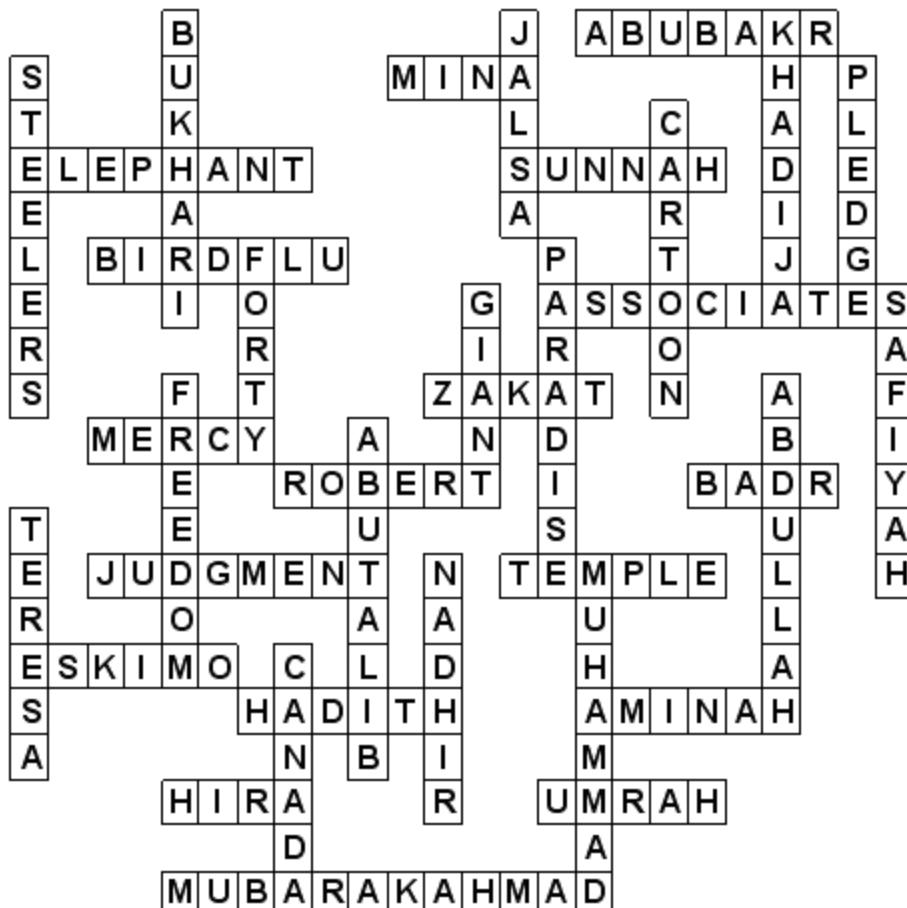
Fill in the blank squares so that each row, each column and each 3-by-3 block contain all of the digits 1 thru 9.

If you use logic you can solve the puzzle without guesswork.

Solutions in next issue.

2		5			7			6
4			9	6			2	
			8			4	5	
9	8			7	4			
5	7		8		2		6	9
			6	3			5	7
7	5			2				
	6			5	1			2
3			4			5		8

Solution to Volume 86, Issue 2

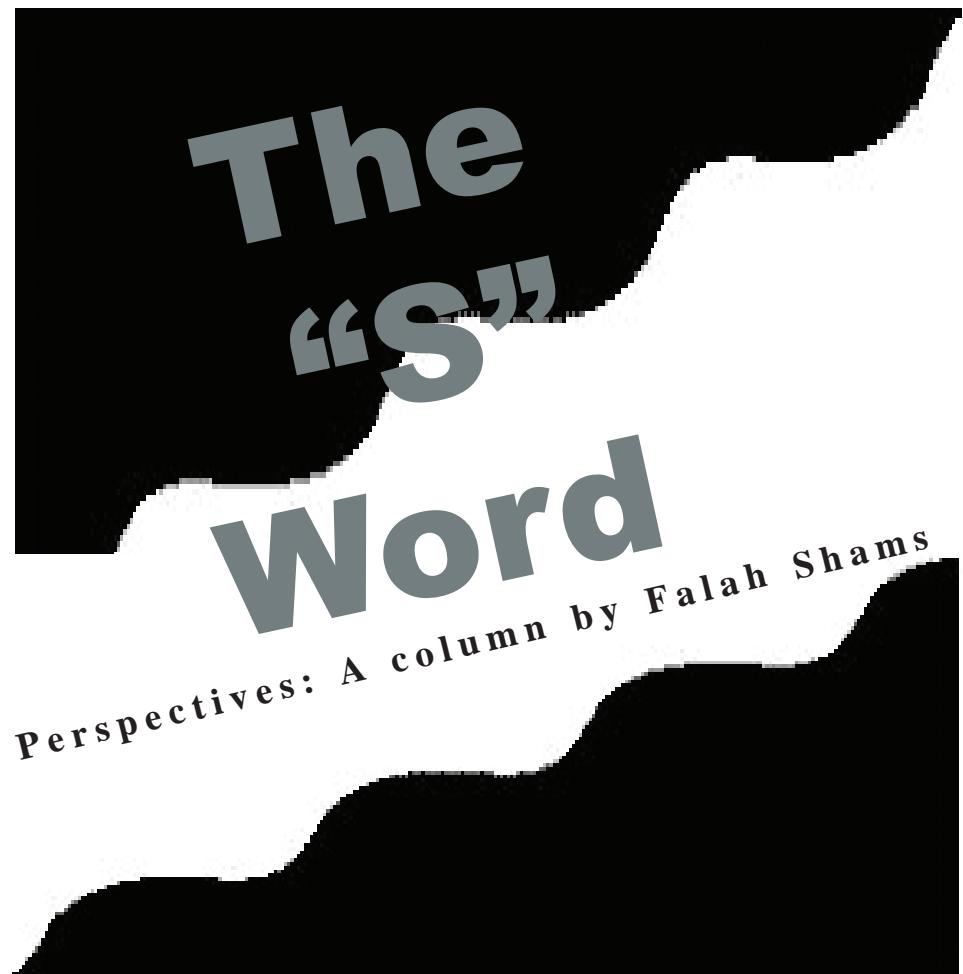


Today, everyone is careful about using the word “sin.” Politicians talk about issues concerning morality, such as homosexuality and the causes of abortion. They all refer to these issues as ‘against our tradition,’ ‘against our values,’ ‘against our religious beliefs,’ thus always avoiding the “S” word. I think it’s a simple enough word; only three letters, one vowel. Maybe it’s because people have forgotten what this term means. We have got enough of it around so I don’t know why we would have a problem referring to it. I think it has to do with our being super conscious about the words we use which have a religious connotation. Otherwise, I fail to understand why a righteous person would object to the use of the “S” word. (A sinner’s objection I can understand.)

When we park on the wrong side of the street or speed on the highways, we know there are consequences. It is because we are breaking the laws established by the government. They may be local, state or federal, but nonetheless, someone is going to make us pay for it. We know it is wrong and we do it intentionally and then justify the reasons for our behavior. There are entire books compiled on the various excuses people have used when caught speeding. We’ve also thought out how we’re going to beat the ticket and which lawyer will help us do that. This, of course, is after trying to talk the officer out of issuing the ticket in the first place.

Sin is nothing more than the breaking of the laws established by God instead of those drafted by humans. It should be simple enough to understand. When we break the laws of the land, we commit a “crime.” Similarly, when we intentionally break the laws of God, we commit a “sin.” Now you can interrelate the words ‘criminal’ and ‘sinful.’ The only thing left to discuss now is what constitutes a sin in the eyes of God and how He is going to make us pay for it. His mercy doesn’t work when we challenge His laws blatantly and openly.

The laws of God are defined in various



religions and preachers make sure that followers are reminded of them constantly. The fact is that without the religion, there is no concept of morality. Speaking the truth, not stealing, respecting your parents and other such values all originated from the teachings of the world’s religions. Most of the laws of the land stem from principles rooted in the prevalent religion of the land. We even know how to make people obey laws against theft or perjury. We just call it a “crime” when these laws are broken, avoiding use of the “S” word. The fact is that most of the time, when breaking the law of the land, we are also breaking the

Sin is nothing more than the breaking of the laws established by God instead of those drafted by humans.

law of God. Like as we may, the punishment for the latter cannot be ignored. Truthful people like Jesus^{as}, Moses^{as} and the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} all testified to it. They had no problem using the “S” word and discussing the court hearing associated with it.

God has declared that there will be a hearing on our violations of His laws. Some refer to it as the ‘Day of Judgment,’ the ‘Hour,’ or the ‘Day of Reckoning.’ Regardless of its name, it is going to take place. The futility of trying to talk ourselves out of it is what we don’t want to think about. So we would rather not discuss it altogether. It is rather difficult to avoid, however, when God is the witness and it is well-established that we were taught the laws through thousands of prophets that came warning us. Lying would not help because it is the All-Knowing God Who is the Judge. This has to be the optimal courtroom; the lawyers are missing. Come to think of it, without

that kind of Day of Judgment, the concept of having laws seems meaningless.

Even a hundred years ago, right here in America, people talked about sin. The politicians, the news reporters and the general public used the word openly. They were not ashamed to refer to something as a sin if it was against the laws of God as described in their faith. Now, we live in a society where if anyone even refers to sin in a statement, news reporters treat it as if it were a statement of 'fundamentalism' by 'right wing ultra conservatives,' one they had better not give meaningful coverage. It's sort of like when they get a statement from a terrorist; they know the public should know about it but they take care not to give it so much coverage that it becomes noteworthy.

One of the reasons for avoiding the word 'sin' has to do with how the behavior of society has changed. A few decades ago, there was no open dating in this country. Chaperons were assigned for courtship of young people before they decided to get married. A person committing sin was openly disliked by, and disgraced in society. The church played an important part in ensuring that decent people were not confused with the violators of the laws of God.

Things have changed. On Monday morning, in offices and factories alike, you hear people discussing what they did over

the weekend and, without using the "S" word, how many times they violated the laws of God. They call it the 'truth,' because why should they hide it, even if what they've done is something wrong. Is it not better to tell the truth about sin, rather than to lie about it, and thus compounding it? Well, I call that the "Boldness of Sin." When people start talking about sinful activities openly, it starts to sound like normal behavior, and then they don't want to call it sin anymore. The concept of hiding the sins of others and not spreading the news relates to the same concept. I purposely did not use the religious terminology 'backbiting' because then I will have to start explaining the use of another term. It is not a good idea to extend this discussion. You see, I have attention-span issues.

Whether we use the "S" word or not, we are still accountable. God still sends His curse upon the liars. The adulterers are still going to be called upon for their punishment. The backbiting and other indecent behavior is still going to be questioned. The court date is definite. Sometimes we think of time in our own terms of measurement, but it maybe sooner than we think. It seems like it was yesterday; I was going to school and demanding things from my parents. Everything got turned around somewhere down the line, but a lot of time has passed

according to the way we measure it. The best thing is to find out what we should avoid because it is against the laws of God so we can be on guard. Christians can watch "The Ten Commandments" and Muslims can study the commandments in the Holy Qur'an, which are about seven hundred in number.

Allah has given us an easier way. Don't be afraid of the burden of learning all the commandments. We have been given a simple formula to follow, until the time when we have gained the proper knowledge. Allah says in Surah Luqman, "Follow the path that leads towards Me." Very simply, it means that when it is time for prayer and your friend is calling you to play around, gossip or watch TV, take the path that will get you closer to God. It is certainly not the path that leads to the television set. Incidentally, that's the same path that is politically incorrect to describe using the "S" word.

Sin is something we should talk about. Avoiding sin is the first step in our upward climb to the towering heights of spirituality that we are all capable of achieving. It's like we have to clean up before we can put the dry-cleaned clothes on and spray the cologne. It would be a shame if we don't try to utilize the capability God bestowed in our souls.

I think it would be a sin.



God has declared that there will be a hearing on our violations of His laws.

Some refer to it as the 'Day of Judgment,' the 'Hour,' or the 'Day of Reckoning.' Regardless of its name, it is going to take place.

Perspectives

Katrina: One Year Later



I had the good fortune to serve as a volunteer with Humanity First and was able to witness first hand the enormous scale of destruction in New Orleans. I still can't comprehend the enormity of it all, and I hope I never have to witness such a scene again. The pictures and videos shown on television offered little justice to the actual destruction.

By Zahid Mian

As the 2006 Hurricane season starts, it's worth looking back at the devastation caused by Katrina last year and the response by citizens across the country. I had the good fortune to serve as a volunteer with Humanity First and was able to witness first hand the enormous scale of destruction in New Orleans. I still can't comprehend the enormity of it all, and I hope I never have to witness such a scene again. The pictures and videos shown on television offered little justice to the actual destruction. Even the stories of evacuees heard on various nightly programs couldn't properly convey the true pain and suffering those folks had suffered.

We all saw the devastation in the aftermath of Katrina; people wading through chest high waters; families stranded on rooftops as though they were on an island; officials trying to rescue people who were drowning in their own houses. At times it was difficult to comprehend the sheer destruction and the lack of help from official agencies. No wonder so many people volunteered their time to help these victims. I, too, was caught up in the emotion and offered my time, but it wasn't until I saw the destruction in person that I realized just how bad the storm was. I saw trailers and large SUVs flipped upside down, houses with flood marks as high as 10 feet, entire neighborhoods in which it seemed that someone had intentionally destroyed each house; churches and office buildings completely destroyed. But nothing could have prepared me for the emotional and psychological damage inflicted upon the victims when I first saw them in the makeshift shelter in Gonzalez, LA. Several hundred evacuees were forced to live in a single hall. Their condition was deplorable, but predictable: they were all stuck there, the good and the bad, under the same conditions for several weeks, which eventually led to fights and even criminal activities. One couldn't help but feel sorry for them, especially the kids, the handicapped and the elderly.

Throughout our stay in the area, the volunteers engaged with the evacuees to

learn more about them and their plight. We met many legitimate and humbled folks, but there was the occasional criminal and opportunist looking for a quick "hit." We did what we could for them, often times driving them to the local DMV, hospital, FEMA office, bus station, etc., and they

community where 70 percent of its children are being born to one parent."

Mr. Nagin was not alone in his judgment. Christians, like Pastor Fred Phelps and Reverend Bill Shanks, along with Muslims across the Middle East agreed that Katrina was a result of God's

form of Divine Punishment? That answer rests with God alone, but what's interesting is that most of those who called this a punishment from God didn't alter their lifestyles at all. Even before the area could begin the massive cleanup efforts shared by volunteers across the country, residents began to go back to casinos. In fact, casino operations in the area were seen as pivotal for economic recovery. Some victims who received federal aid to the tune of \$2,000 inevitably wasted it on frivolous items, including tattoos, alcohol and casinos. Above all, organizing the festival of Mardi Gras (French for "Fat Tuesday"), the "holy" day associated with Lent, but which has come to symbolize wickedness and debauchery, became an urgent priority for officials in New Orleans. The same mayor who had associated Katrina with God's punishment, suddenly favored Mardi Gras because, no doubt, it was going to bring in close to \$1 billion to the local economy. If this was indeed divine punishment, these people didn't do much to ask for His mercy.

My volunteering experience in New Orleans reminded me of a verse in Chapter Al-Imran, verse 111, where Allah mentions the role of Muslims: *"You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin good and forbid evil and believe in Allah. And if the People of the Book had believed, it would have, surely, been better for them. Some of them are believers, but most of them are transgressors."*

This beautiful verse instructs Muslims that their role is to serve mankind in a way that benefits the human race. In addition, it offers the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) a chance to reexamine their own lives. If Muslims were to adopt this attitude in earnest and the People of the Book could believe in the good teachings of Islam (especially in regards to prohibition of arrogance, interest, alcohol and gambling), the human race would indeed be the beneficiary. This is my hope and prayer – that may we Americans, from all backgrounds, find humility in our good works and may we be guided towards all things good. Amen.♦



were always grateful for our help. We also got a chance to work with local churches and they too were happy to work with us. However, by the end of my 10-day stay, even I grew tired of the same old predictable activities. I can only imagine how they felt, having been isolated in that damp, musty shelter for so long. On the flight back to Boston, I couldn't overcome the pity I had for them and continued to pray for the return of normalcy in their lives, whatever that may have been.

What I had seen in New Orleans was truly cataclysmic, so it wasn't surprising to hear politicians and church leaders declare this event as a punishment from God. The mayor of New Orleans, Ray Nagin, famously remarked: "God is mad at America ... [for] being in Iraq under false pretenses ... [and is] upset at black America also ... We are not taking care of ourselves. We are not taking care of our women, and we are not taking care of our children when you have a

wrath upon His sinful creation. Even some of the victims of the disaster felt that they were being punished for their sins. Of course, main stream media immediately labeled such thoughts as sheer lunacy, but the question is well worth pondering.

In the Holy Qur'an, God addresses the issue of Divine Punishment thusly:

"And if Allah were to punish men for their wrongdoing, He would not leave therein a living creature, but He gives them respite till an appointed term, and when their term is come, they cannot remain behind a single hour, nor can they go ahead of it." (16:62)

Through this verse it's clear that God does not punish people for their sins unless it's absolutely necessary or when the sinners have shown no remorse. Once their appointed time has come, punishment will follow. So was Katrina a



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